

arch 6, 1998

Charles to sell
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(AFP) — The
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(AFP) — The
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Sheikh Yassin urges Muslims to unite

CAIRO (AFP) — Hamas' spiritual guide, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, on Monday issued a "cry of help" for Muslims to close ranks against Israel. "Israel usurped the land and the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) calls on the Muslim nation (for help) for the sake of the land and the sacred sites in Jerusalem," Sheikh Yassin said in a statement received here. "This is a vibrant cry of help, deafening the Israeli occupation forces, and urging Muslims to close ranks against Israel and the land-for-peace principle" on which the Middle East peace process is based, he said. "The time has come for our nation to renounce this unjust agreement which has added hardships to our people while benefiting Israel," he said. Sheikh Yassin urged Muslims to liberate Jerusalem, home of the compound of Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. He issued his appeal from Mount Arafat in Saudi Arabia.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Happy 'Eid Al Adha

THE JORDAN TIMES will not be published from Wednesday, April 8, until Friday, April 10. The next issue will appear on Saturday, April 11. The Editor and staff of the Jordan Times wish its readers and advertisers a very happy 'Eid Al Adha.

Volume 23 Number 6806

AMMAN TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 1998, DHUL HIJJA 10, 1418

Price: Jordan 200 fils

PNA: Sharif was killed by his commander in Hamas

Hamas: These lies are an attempt by the PNA to avoid blame, to make the Zionist enemy innocent and to try to prevent our response for the killing

RAMALLAH (AFP) — The bomb-maker for the Islamist group Hamas whose mysterious slaying last week sparked threats of revenge attacks on Israel was murdered by his own commander in an internal feud, Palestinian security sources said Monday.

Adel Awadallah, chief of the Hamas military network on the West Bank, shot and killed bomb-maker Mohieddin Sharif to prevent him from taking charge of their group, a security source said on condition of anonymity.

Yayeh Abdul Rahim, a close aide to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, announced Monday that West Bank police had arrested five Hamas members in connection with the March 29 slaying of Sharif, but he would not provide additional details.

The security source said all five suspects were close associates of Sharif and Awadallah, who escaped arrest and is being hunted by Palestinian police. Hamas, the main armed Palestinian movement, opposed to peace agreements with Israel, rejected the PNA findings as "lies" and renewed charges that Israel killed Sharif and would be the target of revenge attacks.

"The Palestinian Authority story is all lies made under

intense pressure from the United States and Israel," said the statement issued by Izzeddine Al Qassam, the Hamas military wing.

"These lies and inventions are an attempt by the Palestin-



PNA Preventive Security Chief Jibril Rajoub talks to the press in Ramallah on Monday (AP photo)

ian Authority to avoid blame for this crime, to make the Zionist enemy innocent and to try to prevent our response for the killing," it said, vowing that "Sharif's blood will not have been spilled in vain."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had warned Israel would hold President Arafat responsible for any Hamas revenge attacks, welcomed the outcome of the Palestinian investigation as "a positive development."

"This shows that what we said, that Israel was not involved, is true," said Mr. Netanyahu, who has made tougher Palestinian action against Hamas the main condition for moving ahead with the peace process.

"This proves that, if the Palestinian Authority wants, it can fight terrorism," Mr. Netanyahu said. "What they must demonstrate now is the same, systematic, serious and deep war against the terrorists and their infrastructure."

Sharif, 32, an engineer and explosives expert, was believed to have been the main organiser of a spate of suicide bombings which killed dozens of Israelis since 1995. His most recent attacks in Jerusalem last summer killed 21 people and plunged the peace process into crisis.

Sharif was found dead at the scene of an explosion in an industrial zone in Ramallah, which is under the control of the PNA.

An autopsy found that Sharif had been shot and killed before his body was placed in a body-bagged car which was then detonated in an apparent bid to hide his murder.

The senior Palestinian security source said Awadallah was identified as Sharif's murderer by Ghassan Adasi, a recently recruited Hamas

member with whom Sharif was living and who was arrested by Palestinian police hours after the murder.

Mr. Adasi reportedly said he witnessed Awadallah shoot Sharif as the three were sitting in a car in Ramallah.

Awadallah was furious over a bid by Sharif to take over as Izzeddine Al Qassam commander in the West Bank, Mr. Adasi was quoted as saying.

After the shooting, Awadallah ordered Mr. Adasi to detonate explosives in the car to make it appear that Sharif was killed while building a bomb, the sources said.

Senior PNA officials turned over the results of their investigation to Hamas political leaders in Gaza City Monday afternoon but the Islamist group rejected the findings.

"The Palestinian Authority's version of the killing has been rejected by Hamas," said Hamas spokesman Abdul Aziz Rantissi.

"We are carrying out our own investigation and initial results show that Israel is responsible for killing Sharif," Mr. Rantissi said.

Mr. Abdul Rahim warned Hamas against "rushing their reaction" to the charges.

"If Hamas continues to reject the findings," he said, "we will be forced to make more details public."



An aerial view of thousands of Muslim pilgrims standing on Mount Arafat during the annual Muslim Hajj in Mecca, Saudi Arabia on Monday. More than two million Muslims stood in prayer Monday on Mount Arafat, climaxing the annual pilgrimage which marks one of the most sacred days in the Muslim calendar (AP photo)

Muslims climb Mount Arafat, site of the Prophet's last sermon

MOUNT ARAFAAT (AFP) — Some two million Muslims on Monday converged on Mount Arafat, where the Prophet-Mohammad gave his last sermon, to form a sea of humanity for the climax of the annual pilgrimage.

Starting at dawn, pilgrims dressed in white made their way on foot up the rocky mountain in groups from the Mina plain, some 10 kilometres away, where they spent the night in tents.

The pilgrims, including more than one million Muslims from outside Saudi Arabia, spent the day in prayer on and around Mount Arafat.

The "wuquf" (stationing) on the mountain is an essential part of the annual pilgrimage to Islam's holiest sites in western Saudi Arabia, known as the Hajj. It symbolises man's appearance before God on the day of the final judgement.

The centre of the gathering was the 60-metre Jabal Rahmah (Mount of Mercy) from which the prophet, seated on a camel, addressed a crowd of 100,000 faithful for the last time, 14 centuries ago.

The Prophet Mohammad

himself said that "Arafat is the Hajj."

Men in unstitched white, cloth sheets and women covered from head to foot in white, apart from the face and hands, repeatedly chanted a single refrain: "Labbayka Allahumma, labbayk" (Here I am, my God, here I am).

The pilgrims also prayed at the huge Nimra Mosque at the foot of Mount Arafat that can take more than one million worshippers.

The "hajjis" in the open air were sprayed with a fine mist of water, to keep them from dehydrating, and bottles were handed out. Traders sold umbrellas to shield the pilgrims from the sun, and fruits were also up for sale.

The temperature was expected to rise to as high as 39 degrees Celsius.

"Arafat welcomes the guests of Allah," said the commentator on Saudi television which ran a live broadcast of the ascent.

Iranian pilgrims staged a demonstration against Israel and the United States as they marched toward Mount Arafat, the official news agency IRNA reported. Several thousand pil-

grims cried "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."

The protesters then heard a speech from the head of Iran's Mecca pilgrimage affairs, Mohammad Reysbahr, said IRNA.

Iranian pilgrims, although not all of them, have held a "Disavowal of the Pagans" rally each year during the hajj. This year, they numbered 80,000.

Their demonstration has turned violent in the past, including in 1987 when more than 400 pilgrims, mostly Iranians, were killed in clashes with Saudi police.

In the past two years, Iranian pilgrims held the rally in their tent camps.

The latest protest, which Mr. Reysbahr had promised on Saturday would be "very peaceful," came amid efforts by Tehran and Riyadh to end nearly two decades of animosity.

All the pilgrims were to return to Mina at sunset, after stopping en route in the valley of Mozdalifa to collect pebbles with which to stone pillars representing the devil in Mina.

In an earlier leg of their journey of faith, the pilgrims streamed into the Mina plain on Sunday from Mecca, the birthplace of the Prophet. They made the 10-kilometre journey by bus while thousands trekked on foot.

On Tuesday, the first day of the feast of Al Adha, the pilgrims slaughter sheep, lambs and camels to commemorate the act of faith of Abraham who was prepared to sacrifice his son for God.

Mina, dotted with tents for the invasion by pilgrims, has in the past been the scene of several catastrophes in which hundreds of people have died. But this year's Hajj has so far been free of any serious incident.

In April 1997, 343 pilgrims, mostly from India and Pakistan, died in a blaze started by a gas stove which, fanned by strong winds, swept through the tents in Mina.

Saudi authorities have launched a campaign to build 40,000 large fireproof tents in a bid to avoid a repetition of the 1997 inferno, and a ban has been slapped on gas cookers.

Israel to build strip of new towns south of Hebron

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel has approved the creation of six Jewish towns along the border with the West Bank, a project designed to prevent a link-up between Palestinian areas and Bedouin communities inside Israel, officials said Monday.

A cabinet panel approved late Sunday the development plan drawn up by National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon to create the new towns just

inside Israel's pre-1967 frontier with the West Bank south of Hebron.

Officials in Mr. Sharon's ministry said the purpose of the plan was to provide a buffer in Israel between Palestinian areas in the West Bank and Arab Israeli communities who make up a majority of the population in the adjacent Negev desert region.

The project calls for construction during an initial period of 4,500 units in the

six new communities.

No timetable for con-

struction was decided.

The Sharon plan has drawn criticism in Israel both from ecological groups who oppose the development on environmental grounds and from community associations who say the government should focus on developing existing towns in the Negev, one of Israel's more economically depressed regions.

Iran, Iraq exchange more POWs

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran freed 500 more Iraqi prisoners of war (POW) in return for 23 Iranian soldiers in the latest exchange of POWs from their 1980-88 war, the official Iranian news agency IRNA reported Monday.

The latest exchange took place Sunday at Iran's Khosravi border point in Kermanshah province, IRNA said. Officials from both countries and representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross were present.

The swap came as part of an agreement to exchange 380 Iranian captives for 5,592 Iraqis, the most significant prisoner exchange since the U.N.-brokered ceasefire ended the war.

A total of 52,993 Iraqi prisoners and 39,269 Iranians have been freed since the end of the 1980-1988 war between the two countries.

Tehran and Baghdad agreed in January to resolve outstanding problems to normalised ties, 10 years after the end of their bloody conflict, giving priority to humanitarian issues.

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi announced Sunday that Iran would soon officially lift a ban on its citizens travelling to Shiite Muslim holy sites in Iraq.

10,000 Arab Israelis protest home demolitions, police brutality

SHEFARAM (AFP) — Some 10,000 Arab Israelis demonstrated in northern Israel Monday to protest the demolition of bedouin homes by the Jewish state authorities and alleged brutality by Israeli police.

Marchers carried Palestinian flags and the green and white banners of Islam as they paraded from Shefaram to the nearby village of Um Al Sahali, scene of intense clashes over the weekend between Arabs and police.

The march coincided with a general strike observed in Arab towns of northern Israel to protest government policies in dealing with the country's Arab minority. Municipal offices and schools were closed for the day and many businesses only opened in the afternoon.

Witnesses said Israeli police kept their distance from the marchers and no incidents were reported. The strike and demonstrations were organised two days

after dozens of Arabs and police were injured in clashes which erupted during a protest against the police demolition last week of three homes in the Um Al Sahali.

The violence broke out when residents tried to rebuild the homes, which police claimed were constructed without permits although Arabs said had been standing for decades.

Police deployed to prevent the construction were met by a hail of stones and responded by beating protesters with clubs.

Israel's Arab minority numbers about one million out of a total population of some six million.

The Arab citizens, Palestinians who remained in their homes when Israel was created in 1948, have representatives in parliament but most do not serve in the armed forces and complain of economic and political discrimination inside the Jewish state. Abed Anabtawi, a

spokesman for an umbrella organisation for Arab Israeli groups called the Land Committee, said the housing demolition issue was a clear instance of discrimination.

"People build without permits because the state refused to grant them as part of its discriminatory policies," he told AFP, claiming that an additional 12,300 unauthorised Arab homes were slated for demolition.

Ibrahim Nimr Hussein, the mayor of Shefaram, said the large turnout at Monday's protests "are a victory for us because now the government will have to think twice before trying to demolish any more homes."

Israeli President Ezer Weizman told Israel Radio Monday that he "understood the anger" of the Arabs over the housing demolitions and acknowledged that many Arab Israeli citizens live in difficult circumstances.

Civilian killed in south Lebanon bombing

MARJAYOUN (AFP) — A Lebanese civilian was killed and a Pakistani and two other Lebanese civilians wounded Monday when a bomb blew up as their bread truck drove near the Lebanese-Israeli border, Israel's proxy South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia said.

The explosion occurred in mid-morning as the bakery truck was going along the Markaba-Houla road in the Israeli-occupied zone of south Lebanon, the SLA said.

The bomb "destroyed their light truck, which was transporting bread," the SLA said. "A Lebanese civilian was killed and two others injured. A Pakistani employed by the bakery was moderately wounded and hospitalised."

No claim of responsibility has been made so far. Meanwhile, the international committee monitoring the ceasefire in south Lebanon began meeting Monday in the Lebanese town of Naqoura on the border with Israel to review five Lebanese and Israeli complaints.

On the occasion of
EID AL-ADHA
Arab Bank is honoured
to convey to
HIS MAJESTY KING HUSSEIN
and to
the Arab & Islamic nations
its felicitations and best wishes

2 Home & Middle East News

Jordan Times, Tuesday, April 7, 1998

Algerian forces kill more than 100 rebels during sweep — paper

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algerian government forces have killed more than 100 armed Islamists during a major sweep in the Ouassenis region southwest of the capital, the daily L'Authentique reported Monday.

Security services meanwhile said eight people were killed in a massacre by Islamist rebels overnight Sunday at the small village of Sidi Hadjef in the M'Sila district, also southwest of the capital.

An official statement added that security forces had launched an intensive operation to track down the people responsible for the "base and cowardly attack" on Sidi Hadjef.

The death toll in the Ouassenis area may have been as high as 180 to 200 according to a member of a local self-defence group who witnessed the operation which ended on Friday, L'Authentique said.

It added that most sources had given a more plausible toll of more than 100, but said estimates

were difficult as the operation took place over a large area, and artillery fire had dismembered several victims.

An Islamist leader figured among the dead, and two other leaders, or emirs, were arrested, the paper added.

The crackdown in the region destroyed 15 military bunkers, including two used as a command post and hospital.

Security forces were tipped off on the location of the armed groups by an Islamist informer and by three young women kidnapped in a massacre in the Relizane region who escaped from their captors last month.

A separate army operation took place near the town of Sidi Bel Abbas in the northwest, L'Authentique said.

The government paper El Moudjahid said on Saturday that 200 armed Islamists were killed in operations in the west of the country.

These incidents were not confirmed by security forces,

27 killed in 'terrorist' attack

ALGIERS (AFP) — Twenty-seven people were killed overnight by "terrorists" in west Algeria's Arzew region, security officials said in a statement Monday.

The statement came after press reports that Algerian government forces had killed more than 100 armed Islamists during a major sweep in the Ouassenis region southwest of the capital.

but observers have noted a decline in major activities by Islamist armed groups in the past few weeks, though attacks against civilians are reported on a daily basis.

According to Monday's El Watan daily, a bomb exploded last Thursday on a road at Timiridjen in the eastern coastal Jijel region as a military convoy drove past, but the blast caused no injuries.

The dailies Liberté and El Khabar said 20 armed Islamists had been killed in the region of Boumerdes, east of Algiers, while El Watan said two were killed at Sidi Mousa, near the capital.

The army has been carrying out a series of search-and-destroy missions against the bases of armed gangs, particularly in the west of northern Algeria, but no official or independent figures have been released.

Liberté said that figures given in the press itself are often "greatly exaggerated."

Algeria has been in the grip of an Islamist insurrection, at an estimated cost of more than 60,000 lives, since the cancellation in 1992 of the second round of general elections the now-outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.



SPEAKING ABOUT THE PAST: Mohammad Radwan, 70, stands in front of the building that used to be his family home in the Kfar Shaul neighbourhood of occupied Jerusalem as he revisits the area that once was called the Arab village of Deir Yassin. A man from the Orthodox Jewish neighbourhood passes by. Radwan claims 93 villagers died during the battle at Deir Yassin on April 9, 1948 and not the 240 that the Jewish side claimed, and admits that on the basis of the rumours of massacres 'they ended up expelling people from all of Palestine' (Reuters photo)

Arrest of Tehran mayor provokes political confrontation in Iran

By Kianouche Dorrance
Agence France Presse

TEHRAN — The controversial arrest of Tehran's moderate mayor has triggered a crisis among the leadership of the Islamic republic, pitting the administration of President Mohammad Khatami against the conservative-led judiciary.

Mr. Khatami's cabinet held an emergency meeting on Sunday to discuss the surprise detention of Tehran Mayor Gholam-Hossein Karbaschi on corruption charges on Saturday.

Government spokesman Atollah Mohajerani said the ministers were "shocked and saddened" by the move, warning that it could "damage public administration" in Iran.

The arrest has intensified a factional dispute in the Islamic republic and is seen as a major blow to the moderate camp.

Moderate officials and newspapers have rallied support behind the mayor, describing his arrest as a move by their conservative opponents to destabilise Mr. Khatami's government.

"Karbaschi's arrest is a blow to the democracy, political and cultural reform in Iran," said MP Faezeh Hashemi, the daughter of former President Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

"This is an act of revenge by the faction which lost in the presidential election. The mayor has done nothing wrong

except to engage in and succeed in his political activities."

Mr. Karbaschi campaigned hard for Mr. Khatami ahead of the May presidential poll and was instrumental in his victory over a conservative candidate.

The mayor angered right-wing conservatives after he helped form a moderate political group two years ago to challenge the conservatives, which dominated political affairs up to then.

Judicial officials have denied the legal proceedings against the mayor are politically motivated, and say they are part of a campaign against "ill-gotten money."

"The court will investigate free of any political concerns," said Mohsen Ejeili, the head of a special court for trying public servants.

He said "enough evidence has been gathered against the mayor during investigation of other municipality officials" arrested in connection with the case.

Conservative officials have backed the court and said Mr. Karbaschi's impressive achievements during nine years at the helm of the sprawling municipality are no grounds to waive the charges against him.

"All men are equal before the law. Serving the government is no reason to condone violations," said conservative MP Mohammad-Reza Bahonar. "We should accept that the law should treat us all

equally, and Karbaschi is no exception."

Mr. Karbaschi, 44, is a key figure in the president's entourage and the government said he was still officially the mayor of the capital, a post he has held since 1989.

The government daily Iran said Monday that Mr. Karbaschi would stand trial in about three weeks, and that no decision had been taken on whether to hold the trial in public or not.

He is reportedly being held at Tehran's Evin prison. A judicial official, quoted by Iran newspaper, said the judge will make a decision on whether Mr. Karbaschi could be visited in prison.

The Iranian cabinet has charged that "there is not enough legal basis" for the move against the mayor.

"A number of jurists present at the cabinet meeting expressed disbelief at the legal grounds for the detention of Karbaschi," said the government spokesman.

He said the arrest warrant for Mr. Karbaschi had been issued by a judge who was too young and inexperienced, as shown in the content of the warrant.

The interior ministry, which appoints the mayor of the capital, also protested the arrest, complaining it had not been informed of the move.

Israel's main right-, left-wing English press form alliance

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Jerusalem Post, Israel's conservative English-language daily newspaper, announced Monday that it had formed an alliance with the Jerusalem Report, an outspokenly liberal weekly.

Under the deal, the Post purchased a 49 per cent share of the Report and both companies will appoint directors to the other's board, the Post said.

Norman Spector, a former Canadian diplomat who is president and publisher of the Post, will become chief executive officer of the

Report while the magazine's editor, Hersh Goodman, will serve as executive vice-president of the Post.

Mr. Spector said in a statement that the two publications would remain editorially independent while benefiting from consolidation of administrative, circulation and production activities, he said.

Mr. Goodman, who worked at the Jerusalem Post before founding the Report, said the magazine needed to associate with a large publishing house after suffering financial losses in

recent years.

He told reporters that he hoped as executive vice-president at the Post to "return the paper to more professional tracks."

The Jerusalem Post has long been viewed as a mouthpiece for the political right in Israel. Its former managing director, David Bar-Ilan, is now media advisor to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Jerusalem Report, in contrast, is a liberal, independent publication which has strongly supported the peace process.

Pope Shenuda denies persecution of Copts

CAIRO (AFP) — The head of the Coptic Christian church, Pope Shenuda III, denied in statements published on Monday that his community was subject to persecution in Egypt.

"Everything being said about the persecution of the Copts in Egypt is lies," the Egyptian news agency MENA quoted Pope Shenuda as telling reporters.

A U.S.-based Coptic group took out a full-page advertisement in the Washington Post two weeks ago to complain about human rights abuses in Muslim-majority Egypt.

The ad was criticised by influential Copts in Egypt and slammed by Ossama Al Baz, the senior political advisor to President Hosni Mubarak.

Coptic represent about 5.8 per cent of the country's population of 62 million, according to unofficial estimates, but the International Coptic Federation said from Washington that Copts number 10 million people.

Pope Shenuda said that "all the eventual problems the Copts may have should be settled in Egypt," not abroad.

Somali faction leader claims Egyptian mediators are partisan

MOGADISHU (AFP) — A Mogadishu faction leader Monday accused Egyptian mediators of being partisan and treating with contempt Somali leaders who did not sign a peace agreement in Cairo in December.

"They have no regard for faction leaders who were not in Cairo for the peace summit last year. They should not add fuel to the Somali conflict," said Muse Sudi Yalahow, who controls the Medina enclave of south Mogadishu.

Egypt has kept a team of mediators in the Somali capital since January to facilitate the implementation of the Cairo agreement.

Under that agreement, Somali factions undertook to participate in a national reconciliation conference which would create a transitional government of national unity prior to democratic elections.

The conference is slated for May 15 in the southern town of Baidoa. The talks had originally been scheduled for Feb. 15, then March 31, but were delayed largely because another warlord, Hussein Aided, refused to withdraw his militiamen from Baidoa.

Mr. Aided vowed last week to withdraw his militia from Baidoa a month ahead of the national reconciliation talks.

Mr. Yalahow, the deputy chairman of the United Somali Congress/Somali Salvation Alliance, headed by north Mogadishu warlord Ali Mahdi Mobam, said the conference would not take place because Mr. Aided did not intend to withdraw his fighters from Baidoa.

Mr. Ali Mahdi and Mr. Aided maintain that Egypt is an honest peace broker in Somalia.

Feuding warlords control different regions of Somalia, which has been without a government since the overthrow of dictator Mohammad Siad Barre in 1991 by a coalition of clan-based rebels.

Feuding warlords control different regions of Somalia, which has been without a government since the overthrow of dictator Mohammad Siad Barre in 1991 by a coalition of clan-based rebels.

JORDAN TELEVISION

773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

16:10Cartoon — C.R.O.
16:30French programmes
18:00 Quiz Show — Small Talk
18:30Drama — Border town
19:00The Journal
19:15 Doc. — De Cause Affet
19:30News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Pride and Joy
20:00What Would You Do?
20:30Encounter
21:10Drama — Acapoolco Bay
22:00News in English
22:30 Feature Film — "Soul Man"
23:59Metro Cafe
00:30End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:53Fajr
06:13Sunrise/Duha
12:38Dhuhr
15:12Asr
19:03Maghreb
20:22Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel.
4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366

Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church
Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh
Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 771331

Warm and sunny weather conditions will prevail for the coming days with temperatures rising above average by 4-7 degrees Centigrade and winds southerly to light to moderate.

In Aqaba, it will be warm and sunny, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman08/26
Aqaba14/22
Deserts05/27
Jordan Valley12/30
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 23, Aqaba 30 Humidity readings: Amman 24 per cent, Aqaba 19 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Bassam Karadshah 759200
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi 894788
Dr. Salma Daboubi 7767510
Dr. Khalid Abdo 5657129
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asama pharmacy 4637055
Al Salam pharmacy 4636730
Yacoub pharmacy 4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Nairoukha pharmacy 4623672

IRIBD:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh 20080
Al Quds pharmacy()

ZARQA:
Dr. Samir Al Lawzi 989601
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010250
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44 53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic Abdi 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 836813, 856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4642816
Akhil Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital 5674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital

09/983323
Zarqa National Hospital 09/900560
Ibn Sina Hospital 09/986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09/990999

IRIBD:
Princess Basma Hospital 02/275555
Greek Catholic Hospital 02/272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital 02/247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 03/314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:30Damascus (RJ)
07:45Sanaa (RJ)
08:15Aqaba (add) (RJ)
10:20Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:25Beirut (RJ)
10:40Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:50Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
17:05Cairo (RJ)

18:30Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)
19:00London, Frankfurt (RJ)

Other Flights

13:00Riyadh (SV)
13:30Aden (TY)
14:25Munich (LH)
15:00Istanbul (TK)
18:05Kiev (6U)
18:30Dubai, Damascus (EK)
19:00Paris (AF)
20:25Tel Aviv (LY)
21:10Beirut (ME)
21:40Cairo (MS)
23:35Larnaca (CY)
23:40Amsterdam (KL)
00:55Bucharest (RO)
03:00Rome (AZ)
04:25London (BA)
Royal Wings (RW) Flights
08:45Aqaba (RW)
10:05Amman (QAIA) (RW)
10:50Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
18:20Tel Aviv (RW)
19:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
22:20Aqaba (RW)
23:50Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:00Aqaba (add) (RJ)
06:45Beirut (RJ)

08:50Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:15Vienna, Brussels (RJ)
13:00Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
13:00Paris (RJ)
13:15Cairo (RJ)
13:35Frankfurt (RJ)
14:00London (RJ)
21:20Jeddah (RJ)
21:40Damascus (RJ)
22:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights

07:25Frankfurt (LH)
14:30Riyadh (SV)
14:30Aden (TY)
15:15Munich (LH)
16:00Istanbul (TK)
19:05Kiev (6U)
19:30Dubai (EK)
21:10Tel Aviv (LY)
22:40Cairo (MS)
00:40Beirut, Amsterdam (KL)
01:55Bucharest (RO)
04:00Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

07:45Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
09:15Aqaba (RW)
10:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
18:45Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
18:55Tel Aviv (RW)
21:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
22:50Aqaba (RW)

Protests continue in Iranian town over dissident cleric

TEHRAN (AFP) — Shopkeepers in a central town extended their strike for another day to protest the treatment of a dissident cleric under house arrest for criticising Iran's supreme leader, a newspaper said Monday.

The bazaar in Najafabad, hometown of Ayatollah Hossein-

Ali Montazeri, was closed Sunday for a second straight day, and policemen were deployed in the town, which is close to the historic city of Esfahan, Parda (Tomorrow) newspaper said.

It said Friday prayer leaders in Esfahan and Najafabad had appealed to the shopkeepers to

end their strike.

The ayatollah has been under increased police surveillance in the holy city of Qom, central Iran, since November when he criticised leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei for dominating political affairs.

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NEWS
BRIEF

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King receives messages of good wishes on occasion of 'Eid Al Adha

AMMAN (Petra) — On the occasion of 'Eid Al Adha (Feast of Sacrifice)' on Tuesday, His Majesty King Hussein has received cables of good wishes from Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, the speakers of Parliament, heads of public and private organisations, prominent public figures, and heads of religious denominations.

Cables of good wishes were also sent to the King by heads of Arab and Islamic countries on this occasion.

Meanwhile, the Royal Court has announced a programme allowing prominent Jordanians to present their good wishes to the King at Raghadan Palace on Tuesday morning.

The programme includes members of the Council of Ministers, leading public figures, mayors, presidents of trade unions, prominent Muslim and Christian clerics, representatives of refugee camps, heads of diplomatic missions, as well as heads of the Armed Forces, the General Intelligence Department, the Public Security Department and the Civil Defence Department.

U.S. embassy dismisses allegations of American agencies funding Jordanian communist leaders

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The U.S. embassy here yesterday dismissed recent allegations by a former communist leader that U.S. agencies had granted funds to the Jordanian Communist Party (JCP).

"Such reports are baseless and unfounded," a U.S. embassy spokesperson told the Jordan Times.

He was referring to an article by veteran communist Yacoub Zayadine published March 31 in the Arabic daily Al Arab Al Yawm.

Dr. Zayadine, who was JCP secretary general for 10 years from 1987-1997, wrote that "the Central

Intelligence Agency (CIA) had infiltrated the oldest political parties, such as the JCP, by giving huge amounts of money to some of their leaders."

In a column published in the latest issue of the Arabic weekly Al Majd, Dr. Zayadine reiterated his allegations, expressing regret that political parties should rely on financial assistance from the CIA, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), or other North American agencies for their survival.

In a strongly worded press statement Sunday, the JCP responded to Dr. Zayadine's accusations by threatening to take him to court for libel.

"We will defend the party's reputation through all legal means, and will never allow the assassination of its history or the tarnishing of its members' reputation," said the statement.

JCP Secretary General Munir Hamarneh Sunday told the Jordan Times that Dr. Zayadine had been asked twice to produce evidence of his allegations before the Disciplinary Committee of the party, but "he never showed up."

The Jordan Times yesterday was unable to reach Dr. Zayadine for comment.

asked for an official investigation into funds received by one JCP leader during his frequent trips to New York, but the request was turned down.

Frustrated by his "helplessness in solving this dangerous case within the party's political framework," Dr. Zayadine reportedly resorted to exposing it to the general public.

Al Arab Al Yawm also said Dr. Zayadine apologised for not showing up before the JCP Disciplinary Committee, citing health reasons, and asked instead for a meeting with the party's politburo.

Dr. Zayadine, 76, won the Jerusalem seat in the 1950 parliamentary elec-

tions, and has been a prominent player on Jordan's political stage ever since.

He succeeded in keeping the JCP united after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which dealt a heavy blow to communist groups worldwide.

He also maintained the party through the internal divisions sparked by Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, when some communists opposed Baghdad's move, while others supported it.

During the party's last elections, in December, he turned down a re-election bid due to his age and his desire "to give younger comrades the chance to reach leadership positions as part of change."

Theatre festival concludes with rousing performance by local band

By Omar Karmi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Fifth Amman International Theatre Festival for Independent Groups concluded Sunday after two successful weeks with the promise of a sixth next year.

The festival's finale was a performance at the Royal Cultural Centre by the local Jordanian band, The Petra Group.

Having put on performances by theatre groups from all over the Arab World as well as Sweden, France, Indonesia and India, it was fitting that the finale, like the curtain raiser, came from the host country.

Organisers estimated that around 500-600 people attended performances each night of the festival, and Sunday's concert saw them sitting in the aisles of the Main Hall. Packed to the rafters, the audience gave everything it had. Clapping, whooping and sometimes singing along, they left Tareq Nasser, pianist and composer, and his band without a doubt as to the audience's appreciation of their first live performance.

Tareq Nasser is well-known for his music, having composed for both Syrian and Jordanian television. The band itself, a nine-piece set-up composed of piano, oud, violin, saxophone, flute, congo drum, a "tar" - the Arabic drum, a "jerah" drum - what most people know as a clay water jug - and three voices, has been together for nearly five years. The reason this was their first live performance, explained Mr. Nasser, is that most of their work has been in the studio.

In fact, Mr. Nasser's fame is all the more astonishing seeing that he doesn't even have a tape for general release. This is something the festival has changed: a workshop between



The Swedish band Backa rehearses before their performance at the final night of the Fifth Amman International Theatre Festival for Independent Groups

the Swedish group Backa and The Petra Group, which was recorded, will soon be available on general release.

Arabic music, to the Western ear, is not often easily accessible. The main reason for this is the quarter note - Western music has only half notes. The quarter note makes the tune distinctively Eastern and more complicated, but creates difficulties in trying to arrange for harmonies, which in turn give Western music its very melodic quality.

Mr. Nasser has cut out the quarter notes and added three-part harmonies to Arabic melodies (of his own composition), retaining the traditional rhythm and arrangement. The end result is a very ambient and melodic sound, which

nevertheless retains its distinctive Arabic origin.

It is not necessarily a conscious effort on behalf of Mr. Nasser, that his music should be more accessible to "the Western ear," but it was something that he was made conscious of during the "jam" with the Swedes. They picked up on his music so fast and were very enthusiastic about it.

One of the aims of the festival is to promote greater understanding between various artistic cultures, and it is a tribute to the organisers that it should have produced what has every appearance of becoming a huge success: watch out for the Petra Group/Backa collaboration in a Music Box near you.

Health ministry report notes unsatisfactory care for pregnant women

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Health's annual report on the mother and child care services in Jordan have noted an unsatisfactory situation with regard to the coverage rate of pregnant women, which stands at 25 per cent.

The report, which announced that Jordan will observe World Health Day today, also said post-delivery services cover an estimated eight per cent and family planning services 4.7 per cent of women.

However, the report noted that there has been a progressive improvement in the mortality rate of newborn children, which now stands at 32 for every 1,000 births. The birth rate stands at 3.5 per cent annually, it added.

The mother and child health care services were started by the Ministry of Health in 1953. According to the report, there is one centre offering these services for every 49,000 persons in the Amman region. In Karak, the distribution rate is one for every 5,000 citizens, while in other governorates, there is one for up to every 10,000 citizens, depending on the population density.

The report pointed out that the Ministry of Health maintains close cooperation in providing health services with other concerned departments, such as the Ministry of Education. It said the Ministry of Health plans to carry out public awareness programmes focusing on maternal health and mother and child health, among other subjects, through the media in the coming few days.



CIRCASSIAN DANCE TROOP PERFORMS: The Adyge Circassian dancing troupe from Russia performs the dance of their forefathers Monday at Al Hussein Sports City in Amman. The troupe performed as part of their Middle Eastern tour during the Muslim 'Eid Al Adha festival, which started on Monday (Reuters photo)

Srouer demands full IPU membership for Palestinian Legislative Council

WINDHOEK (Petra) — The speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Sa'd Hayel Srouer, who is attending the 99th meeting of the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), has demanded that the Palestinian Legislative Council be admitted as a full IPU member.

Mr. Srouer made his remarks at a preparatory meeting of Arab delegations to coordinate the stands of Arab parliaments at the IPU meeting, which opened Monday in the Namibian capital of Windhoek.

He also demanded that Arab states support efforts by the Arab Parliamentary

Union (APU) to be recognised as an associate member of the IPU.

In their addresses to the meeting, Jordanian parliamentary delegation members Jawdat Shoul, Ali Abul Ragheb, Fawzi Tameh and Mohammad Bataineh underlined the need for united Arab positions vis-à-vis the topics on the IPU agenda.

The Libyan delegate suggested that the Arab delegates request the lifting of sanctions imposed on Libya be added to the agenda.

The Arab delegates unanimously supported the nomination of a Tunisian deputy, Faezah

Kafi, as head of the coordination committee on women parliamentarians.

Mr. Srouer, who is expected to deliver Jordan's address to the meeting next week, met separately with the heads of delegations from Syria, Iraq, Morocco and Palestine.

According to Mr. Srouer, the IPU's agenda covers world economic, political and social questions, means of avoiding conflicts, establishing peace in countries plagued by unrest, the right of refugees to repatriation, combating AIDS and promoting democracy around the world.

In his address to the conference, which ends April 11, Mr. Srouer will review developments in the Middle East peace process, Jordan's contributions to the cause of peace, and human rights issues.

Later Monday, Mr. Srouer was received by Namibian President Sam Nujoma, to whom he conveyed greetings from His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan. They also reviewed topics on the IPU agenda.

Mr. Srouer said Jordan was keen on promoting its relations with Namibia and African nations at large.

Three family members suffocate

AMMAN (J.T.) — Three members of the same family died of suffocation in the Jabal Zuhur district Sunday night. A police report said a member of the family found the three, aged 75, 17 and 12, lying on the floor when he entered the house and reported the matter to the police. The three died of asphyxiation resulting from inhaling gas leaking from a cylinder in their home, according to the report. The bodies were taken to Al Bashir

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hospital for an autopsy.

Rotary club donates dressmaking shop to charitable society

AMMAN (Petra) — The Amman/Jerash Rotary Club announced Monday that it has financed the creation of a dressmaking shop, which it presented to Al Rajaa' Charitable Society for deaf women in the Yajouz district. Representatives of the club presented the machines to the society's council.

What's going on

- EXHIBITIONS**
- * Exhibition of electrical equipment, home appliances, clothing, perfume, sweets (marking the advent of 'Eid Al Adha) at the University of Jordan, until April 7.
 - * Paintings on handmade paper at Nour Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Sagra St. (Tel. 5699141/2), until April 25.
 - * Modern Jordanian Ceramics by Raed Al Dahleh at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until April 10.
 - * Works by Jordanian artist Yousef Baddawi at Darar Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh until April 9 (Tel. 4643251/2).
 - Also displaying a private collection of Mamdouh Bishara entitled "A Vision, An Identity" and works by contemporary Arab artists — "The New Collection."

Jordanian Saddam Hussein gets mixed reception for learning Hebrew in Israel

By Ahmad Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's 16-year-old Saddam Hussein Dalgamouni won the hearts of many Israelis after attending a recent course at an Israeli institute, but returned home to find a storm of protest from political parties opposed to normalisation with the Jewish state.

The teenager, named after Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein — an arch-foe for most Israelis for attacking the Jewish state with missiles seven years ago — said he won a scholarship to polish up his "advanced" Hebrew skills acquired from watching Israeli television programmes.

He tried in vain to seek a local institution to help him pursue his Hebrew language studies, but most said he was

too advanced for their programmes.

After months of search, luck knocked on his door, he said.

The cultural attaché at the Israeli embassy in Amman, who heard of his wish to improve his Hebrew skills through a local newspaper, offered him a chance to attend a 30-day course for free at "Olpan Akiva," a religious-run Israeli educational institution.

"None of the concerned parties in the country were able to help me although I took all the required exams to help identify my Hebrew language skills," Mr. Dalgamouni, a resident of the northern town of Irbid, told the Jordan Times.

He was referring to several cultural centres teaching Hebrew language across the country but only offering

basic four-level courses.

"I even tried to offer my services for free, such as helping translate from Hebrew to Arabic to develop my skills, but no one cared," he added.

"So, I had no choice but to accept the Israeli offer."

He said the embassy's cultural attaché and a team from Israeli television visited him and tested his Hebrew language abilities.

Israeli embassy officials were not immediately available for comment.

"After that, they offered me a one-month scholarship to study at Olpan Akiva institution in the Israeli city of Natanya," Mr. Dalgamouni explained.

The institution focuses mainly on teaching Hebrew and religion to children of Jewish immigrants.

However, an Irbid-based Islamist-led coalition of politi-

cal parties opposed to Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel condemned Mr. Dalgamouni's trip to Israel and urged his family to protect him from Jewish attempts to "brainwash him."

"I asked those who opposed my acceptance of the scholarship to suggest an alternative," said Mr. Dalgamouni. "What was I expected to do if I could not find a chance in my own country?"

"I believe there is nothing wrong in taking advantage of our democracy and of the peace process between the two countries," he added.

Many Jordanians remain opposed to the treaty that ended a 46-year state of war between the two countries and opened the door for normalisation.

However, several Jordanians are pursuing higher education in Israel.

Palestinian rights committee reviews developments in refugee camp

AMMAN (J.T.) — A committee for the defence of the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland Monday reaffirmed its determination to confront attempts on the part of any party to deny the refugees' rights.

In a statement made available to the Jordan Times, Ulayan Ulayan, spokesperson for the committee, said the committee members met Sunday and took a number of decisions concerning the committee's mission and activities.

He said the committee does not serve as a rival to the Palestine Liberation Organisation but stressed that the refugees' cause is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and should be protected by all means. The statement said: "The

Palestine issue is an Arab Nation problem as much as it is a problem for the Palestinians, and therefore it is the duty of all Arab countries to carry out collective action to defend the refugees' rights."

The committee said it opposes any attempt to liquidate the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) or to reduce its services to the refugees because, it said, the agency has received a mandate from the international community to serve the refugees until the problem has been solved.

According to the statement, the committee reviewed the outcome of a meeting between the refugees and Mamdouh Abbadi, mayor of Amman, following the demolition of a number of housing

units in Al Hussein Refugee Camp. The committee stressed the need for the implementation of what was agreed on during the meeting with Dr. Abbadi, particularly understandings concerning the creation of new homes for those who lost their housing in the refugee camps.

The group also requested that it be represented in contacts and talks with UNRWA and the government in order to follow up on the demolition question at the camp.

The statement said the committee members plan to meet with UNRWA Commissioner General Peter Hansen and other concerned officials to discuss housing for those refugees who lost their homes in Al Hussein camp.

South and North Korea agree to high-level talks, venue undecided

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea and North Korea agreed Monday to hold high-level talks for the first time in four years.

But they differed on the venue, with Pyongyang wanting Beijing and Seoul pushing for the truce village of Panmunjom.

"We will send a five-member delegation headed by the vice-minister of unification to discuss bilateral issues including ways to renew South-North Korean relations and fertilisers," Seoul said in a message to the North.

"We will keep April 11 as the date as your side has proposed, but taking into account that this is a new meeting... we think it would be better to hold it either in Panmunjom or elsewhere on the Korean Peninsula, whichever you choose," it said.

Government officials said Seoul's message was relayed at 3:00 p.m. (0600 GMT) over the hot-line telephone between the South and North Korean Red Cross liaison offices in Panmunjom.

The meeting, if it goes ahead as scheduled, will be

the first official government-to-government contact between the two warring Koreas since ties were cut in July 1994 after the death of the North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung.

Asked if the talks would take place even if North Korea insists on Beijing as the venue, Unification Minister Kang In-Duk told reporters: "We will make a decision after receiving a response back from North Korea."

"Several issues, not only on fertilisers but also family reunions and economic exchanges, will be discussed at this meeting," he added.

But government officials here warned it was early to be too optimistic on non-food issues since North Korea's purpose for the meeting was "really for them to ask us for the fertilisers and food aid."

"We will have to wait and see, but we hope North Korea would agree to change the venue since we are hoping this round of talks will lead to the beginning of dialogue between the two Koreas," a government official told AFP.

"North Korea is desperate for the fertilisers and all the food aid it can get from us. Our government has said it was willing to offer more food aid only if North Korea officially asks for it," the official said.

A panel of U.S. experts last week said it estimated that at least one million North Koreans had died of hunger, and North Korea has said its supplies of food grains ran out completely in March.

North Korea Saturday proposed holding the vice-ministerial level talks in Beijing on April 11 to "discuss the provision of fertilisers and other issues of bilateral concern."

South Korea last month said it was ready to help supply possibly as much as 200,000 tonnes of nitrate fertilisers to help the famine-stricken North's crippled agricultural system during the crucial spring planting season.

Seoul has pledged 50,000 tonnes of food through U.N. channels, and the South Korean Red Cross other 50,000 tonnes.

South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung Sunday

welcomed North Korea's proposal as "major progress and change" in relations between the two Koreas, still technically at war since the 1950-53 Korean war ended with the signing of an armistice.

South and North Korea, the United States and China have held two rounds of talks in Geneva to try to replace the armistice with a permanent peace treaty, but the last round broke down last month and they have not yet even set the date for the next meeting.

Mr. Kim has said he was against any "German-style" absorption of the North by the South, and a strict separation of politics from economic concerns.

Mr. Kim also placed priority on uniting the millions of family members divided by the 1950-53 Korean war in what he called his "sunshine policy."

Since the war only one reunion has been held, involving a handful of family members. In 1985, many have no idea whether relatives are alive or dead.



Northern Ireland peace talks chairman and former U.S. Senator George Mitchell arrives at Stormont for the final week of multi-party peace talks. The parties have until Thursday's deadline to reach an agreement on the future of Northern Ireland (Reuters photo)

N. Ireland Protestant rules out agreement at any price

BELFAST (AFP) — Ulster Unionists said Monday that they would not sign up to an "agreement at any price" for a Northern Ireland peace settlement.

Jeffrey Donaldson, negotiator for the Ulster Unionists, the province's biggest party representing the Protestant majority, told BBC radio there were still fundamental difficulties to be resolved before an agreement could be reached.

London and Dublin hope to present a blueprint settlement to the negotiators Monday.

Mr. Donaldson told BBC Radio: "I think there are still very real difficulties to be resolved between us in terms of arriving at an agreement. Those difficulties are fairly fundamental and it's not clear yet whether they can actually

be resolved for the deadline."

Mr. Donaldson added: "At the end of the day, the Ulster Unionists want to see agreement but it is not agreement at any price. We represent the pro-union people of Northern Ireland and we will not be signing up to an agreement which would fundamentally undermine Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom."

The head of the Ulster Unionist Party, David Trimble, agreed there were still problems regarding a key issue — creation of a cross-border body linking Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

Referring to the Catholic nationalists, he told the BBC: "We understand their concerns. We are ready to meet their concerns if we

can, but the problem is how do you do that and still have an institution that is workable."

Catholics want such a body to have executive powers but the Protestants are wary that such an arrangement would give the Republic of Ireland too much of a say in the running of Northern Ireland affairs.

Despite crucial differences on the north-south body, the British and Irish governments sponsoring the talks are optimistic that a peace agreement will be signed on April 9.

Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam said she was certain that an agreement between all parties would be found by the Thursday deadline set by the American chairman of the talks, former Senator George Mitchell.

Euthanasia row looms large in Dutch election

AMSTERDAM (R) — Controversial proposals to legalise euthanasia and end-of-life medical practice have electrified an otherwise staid Dutch election campaign as leading parties battle for floating voters.

With more than a third of the electorate still wavering and three-quarters of that number rating euthanasia a hot political issue, the stakes are high ahead of the May 6 poll.

The reformist D66, junior partner in the current three-way coalition with Labour and the Liberals (VVD), has already announced it will fight the election on a pro-euthanasia ticket.

Desperate to reverse a steep decline in opinion polls, D66 has shifted the emphasis of its campaign away from the economy and towards ethics. It hopes to revive its flagging fortunes by championing mercy killings.

Its proposed amendments to existing legislation have unleashed a party-political war of words which could have a real bearing on the outcome of next month's poll.

Opening the attack in Protestant daily newspaper Trouw, Kees Klop of the opposition Christian Democrats (CDA) said 32 years of D66 had yielded three rights: "The right to kill others... the right to kill yourself... and the right to shop Sundays."

D66 party leader, Health Minister Els Borst, slammed the comments as "a scandalous caricature" of the truth.

Although technically illegal, euthanasia is tolerated by the Dutch authorities provided certain strict conditions are met. The onus is on a physician to prove a compelling argument for relieving suffering, as opposed to preserving life.

Right-to-die campaigners believe the existing rules offer doctors insufficient legal protection and point to a string of prosecutions brought in 1973 after the government changed its interpretation of the guidelines.

D66 wants to clarify the existing laws so that doctors who follow the rules are exempt from prosecution. Its proposals have won support from the VVD.

and Labour Prime Minister Wim Kok has said the issue could play a role in talks to form a new coalition.

The CDA, however, have made clear they will not countenance the D66 proposals. Vigorously anti-euthanasia and anti-abortion, the CDA is the second largest party in the current parliament, with 34 of the 150 seats, and is running a close third in opinion polls.

"Euthanasia is becoming a highly topical issue once more," Jan Van Der Worp, director of the Dutch Voluntary Euthanasia Society (DVES) told Reuters.

He said DVES was advising its 100,000 members to vote for parties backing euthanasia reform in their electoral programmes.

"That's not only D66 but also the liberal and green left parties," he said.

A poll by Dutch radio concluded 84 per cent of voters were in favour of legalising euthanasia if carried out by a doctor under strict conditions. In 1996, doctors said they helped 3,200 people to die.

Dinosaur remains found under Argentine city

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Fossil bones of a dinosaur 85 million years old have been uncovered by construction workers in south-western Argentina, palaeontologists reported late Sunday.

The remains were uncovered by workers in the Patagonian city of

Neuquen, some 575 kilometres southwest of Buenos Aires, as they were digging for the foundation of a building, palaeontologists from the National University of Comahue said.

The palaeontologists are still not certain what kind of dinosaur it is, but speculated that it was

likely to be a known species that was eight metres long.

The remains, especially the skull, were in a bad state due to the humidity in the soil, palaeontologist Pablo Posse told Reuters.

Dinosaur fossils have been found in the area before.

Bosnia awaits French President Chirac's visit

SARAJEVO (AFP) — Bosnia-Herzegovina was preparing Monday for a 24-hour visit by French President Jacques Chirac, whose arrival coincides with the sixth anniversary of the start of the 1992-95 war.

Mr. Chirac, making his first trip to Bosnia, was to arrive in Sarajevo from Paris at around 8:00 p.m. (1800 GMT), and spend much of Tuesday in the capital before visiting a French army base at Mostar.

Over the weekend city workers hoisted the French tricolour alongside the Bosnian and Muslim-Croat Federation flags on lamp posts in the city centre, where buildings are still peppered by bullet holes and streets crisscrossed with "Sarajevo roses" — the imprints of deadly Serb mortar shells.

"Bosnia-Herzegovina will welcome Chirac as a friend, and Sarajevans will never forget his role in lifting the city's siege," the Oslobođenje newspaper wrote Monday.

Mr. Chirac, who took office in May 1995, is seen as being more willing than his predecessor François Mitterrand to use NATO firepower against Serb forces which had been laying siege to Sarajevo since April 6, 1992.

Seven months later he hosted the signing in Paris of the Dayton peace accords, which ended the war by deploying a multinational NATO-led force across the former Yugoslav Republic.

Mitterrand was the last French president to visit Bosnia, and he did so in spectacular form, donning a flak jacket to pay a brief visit to Sarajevo two months after the siege began.

But many Sarajevans feel he was opposed to the use of air-strikes against the Serb gunners high in the hills over their city.

"Mitterrand minimised the problem in Bosnia to a humanitarian issue," Oslobođenje wrote, whereas "Chirac marked a radical turning point in French policy."

Mr. Chirac's programme includes a gathering with the French community after his arrival Monday.

Tuesday he meets separately, then together with President Alija Izetbegovic, a Muslim, and the Serb and Croat members of Bosnia's collective presidency, Momcilo Krajcinovic and Kresimir Zubak.

After that he will take a walk through the city centre and speak at the national theatre to young Muslims, Serbs and Croats who are being bussed in for the occasion from all over Bosnia.

Later Tuesday he will fly to Mostar — the Herzegovina city divided between Muslims and Croats — to inspect some of the 3,500 French troops serving with the NATO-led peacekeeping Stabilisation Force (SFOR).

Leader says Khmer Rouge has routed government forces

SRI SA KET, Thailand (AFP) — Cambodia's Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan said Monday, and the Thai military confirmed, his forces had beaten back government troops trying to take the rebels' last stronghold.

Khieu Samphan said in an interview with clandestine Khmer Rouge radio that his forces had routed Phnom Penh troops, who had been attempting to overrun Anlong Veng in northern Cambodia.

"The whole of Anlong Veng has been completely liberated and reoccupied by (Khmer Rouge) forces and local residents, who have utterly destroyed the operation of Hun Sen and the communists," the radio said.

A senior Thai military officer who escorted reporters to the border here in northeast Thailand Monday, confirmed the Khmer Rouge old-guard had regained "complete control" of the jungle base.

Khmer Rouge forces had by Saturday pushed the troops of second Premier Hun Sen southwards to an area outside of Anlong Veng, seizing a string of villages formerly occupied by state forces, Khieu Samphan said.

The guerrillas had "chased out all the puppets and traitors after completely destroying them," he said in the broadcast monitored here.

A clean-up operation was underway in the vicinity of the sprawling jungle base, Khieu Samphan said in his second broadcast in three days, apparently aimed at proving rebel control of the area.

The leader branded the battle a "major defeat" for Phnom Penh and vowed no such military advances into rebel territory would take place again. He said seven government soldiers had been killed in a battle Saturday.

A group of Khmer Rouge defectors, number by sources in the area at about 600, struck a deal late last month with government forces, allowing troops to enter the Anlong Veng area for the first time in nearly four years.

Government troops gained a shaky foothold, but were reportedly beaten back in a counter-offensive, according to the Thai military and to Cambodian sources who have been to the area. Thousands of refugees fled 16 kilometres to the Thai border.

Thailand said it had not allowed the refugees to cross the border, nor had it received any requests for asylum from the Khmer Rouge leadership.

Colonel Theerasak Rirtivong, commander of 16th infantry regiment in Sri Sa Ket province, who confirmed the Khmer Rouge claims, said most of the 7,000 refugees had returned home as fighting subsided.

About 200 families — between 1,000 and 2,000 people — were encamped on the Cambodian side of the border, their villages held by government troops.

The rebel radio dismissed as lies reports that Thailand had refused to open its border to the fleeing residents of Anlong Veng.

No independent confirmation of whether they were actually allowed to enter Thailand was possible as the border area is sealed to civilians.

The radio, which broadcasts from a mobile unit thought to be in Anlong Veng, also strongly denied some reports which had indicated it was transmitting from within Thai territory.

Fifty face execution, jail for selling 112 people in China

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese authorities have sentenced 52 people to death, life imprisonment or shorter jail terms for abducting and selling 112 women and children in the southeastern province of Fujian, an official said Monday.

Seven received the death penalty while two were sent to prison for life, the official from the Quanzhou People's Intermediate Court said, adding the rest received sentences ranging from 18 months to 15 years.

The Sing Tao newspaper in Hong Kong said the sentences were passed at a court in Anxi district, where most of the gang came from, adding it was the largest such case to date.

The gang, headed by three brothers, also raped 13 of the women. Five of them attempted suicide, two successfully, it said.

The case came to light when some of the women escaped and alerted the police who moved in to end the gang's four-year crime spree, the official said.

The 110 women and two children, a boy of 16 and a 14-year-old girl, came away from the poorer provinces of Guizhou in the southwest or Guangxi in the south and were sold in the wealthier coastal province of Fujian for between 1,700 and 3,300 yuan (\$202 to \$393) between 1991 and 1995.

The official said two of the women were kidnapped by members of their own family.

Women are often sold to poor farmers in remote rural areas who are looking for wives, while children go to couples who cannot conceive.

Most of the women in the Fujian case had returned to their families but some had preferred to stay with their husbands, the official said.

Public security ministry figures show that nationwide between 1991 and 1995, 88,700 women and children had been freed from kidnap, while 32,000 trafficking gangs had been broken up and 143,000 people arrested.

Jailed Chinese journalist must have treatment

PARIS (AFP) — Press freedom activists demonstrated Monday at venues where Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji was meeting with French officials and businessmen and demanded the urgent hospitalisation of imprisoned Chinese journalist Gao Yu.

Reporters sans Frontières (RSF) — Reporters without Borders — said in a statement distributed outside the headquarters of the French Employers' Association that the health of the 54-year-old journalist was causing "extreme concern."

"Gao Yu's life is in danger," the communiqué said. "We are not talking here about only allowing a journalist to express herself again but about allowing her to live."

French police later picked up a dozen-odd members of the RSF group who were protesting about the plight of Gao Yu outside a big Paris hotel where the Chinese premier was holding another meeting with French businessmen. The protesters were released after identity checks.

Ms. Gao, 54, who worked for the Hong Kong newspapers Mirror Monthly and Chinese Overseas Daily, was arrested in October 1993 and sentenced a year later to six years in prison for "divulging state secrets."

China's new Premier Mr. Zhu, on a three-day official visit to France, was meeting Monday with President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin as

well as the speakers of the national assembly and the senate.

It was unclear whether Gao Yu's case would be raised during the discussions.

RSF appealed for her release on medical grounds in March saying that this would mark a small step towards improving human rights in China. It also called for the "immediate, unconditional release of the 12 journalists currently imprisoned in China."

A year ago Gao Yu won the prestigious UNESCO/Guillermo Cano Prize for Freedom of the Press. She had already spent 14 months in prison following the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown.

World News
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Bosnia waits French president Thirac's visit Balladur defends conduct of French army in Rwanda

PARIS (AFP) — French ex-Premier Edouard Balladur Monday defended the conduct of French troops during Rwanda's 1994 genocide, after charges that they let hundreds of Tutsis be massacred by Hutu killers.

Mr. Balladur, who was right-wing prime minister from 1993 to 1995, told the French radio station Europe 1 that "the French army had no responsibility for the genocide in Rwanda, just the opposite."

He said he would give evidence on April 21 to a National Assembly investigation currently being held into the French role in ethnically troubled Rwanda, along with other three other ex-ministers from his cabinet, Alain Juppé (foreign affairs), François Leotard (defence) and Michel Rofessin (cooperation).

"We will make sure that the honour of France and the French army is protected from attacks that are completely unfair," Mr. Balladur said, adding that France had been the only country to request humanitarian intervention in Rwanda, or to send troops in number to police the conflict.

He said he was "scandalised" that France was being held responsible when it was the only country that attempted to prevent the "genocide" and to use that word to describe the massacres in which between 500,000 and 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus are estimated to have been killed by Hutu extremists.

Friday, a London-based rights group, African Rights, accused French troops stationed in parts of Rwanda 10 weeks after the beginning of the mass slaughter of ignoring the pleas of wounded Tutsis, effectively leaving 1,000 people to be slaughtered.

The report said French marine commandos left the Tutsis at Bisesero in western Rwanda, telling them they would return in three days, which they did to find they had been massacred.

The mass killings ended when then rebels of the mainly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) routed the Hutu extremist Interahamwe militia and French-trained Hutu government troops in July 1994, establishing a new regime in the capital Kigali.



Sonia Gandhi (left), the Italian-born widow of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, confers with Congress Party Vice-President Jitendra Prasad at a party conference which ratified her appointment as president of the party in New Delhi (Reuters photo)

India's Hindu government under fascist control, says Congress Party

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's oldest party said Monday the country's new Hindu nationalist government was controlled by a "fascist" organisation.

The 113-year-old Congress — which ratified Sonia Gandhi, widow of assassinated former premier Rajiv Gandhi, as party chief — said the coalition government led by the nationalist BJP was being run by fundamentalists who wanted to turn India into a Hindu theocracy.

"The BJP is not master of its own house and ultimately it is the RSS, a fascist organisation, which runs the show," a resolution drafted by the party said of the new government which took office last month.

"This political duplicity will, at some point of time, reach a flashpoint."

The Congress, founded in 1885, is in decline after dominating politics under the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty for most of the half-century since independence.

It lost power in 1996 in its worst-ever election showing. Its total of 141 of 545 seats in the just-concluded February-March elections failed to improve on that disaster.

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party), the Congress' arch-rivals and accused of championing Hindu supremacy in secular India, led a coalition to power last month.

The BJP traces its origins to the Hindu right-wing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, National Volunteer Corps).

That organisation was temporarily banned after being blamed for the 1992 razing of a mosque that claimed the lives of some 2,000 people in subsequent religious violence.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee last week said the RSS was being misrepresented and was good for national discipline.

The Congress resolution said it would never ally itself with the BJP or its allies. "The Congress has never in the past and shall never in the future, make any compromise, under any circumstances, with these forces."

The pluralistic society of India is the only guarantee of its unity and integrity," it said. "The Congress party pledges to safeguard this identity ... and is prepared to make any sacrifices for this cause."

U.N. urged to hear crimes against women

COLOMBO (R) — The proposed international criminal court should hear cases of war crimes against women and individuals should be allowed to petition it, the U.N. special rapporteur on violence against women said.

As U.N. members draw up plans for the court, the official, Radhika Coomaraswamy, said judicial independence would be threatened if crimes against women were referred to the new court only by the U.N. Security Council.

"Some countries are suggesting the Security Council should refer the cases. This will be a real dilution. It should be individual petitions and independent prosecutors handling the cases," Ms. Coomaraswamy said without elaborating.

"We want the court to deal with women's issues, including sexual offences, as war crimes against women," she told Reuters in an interview.

Lawyers from more than 100 countries are scheduled to meet in Rome in June to finalise plans for the international criminal court.

The proposed court is separate from the established International Court of Justice at the Hague, which handles disputes between nations.

Ms. Coomaraswamy, who is to hand over her 1997 report on women in armed conflict to the U.N. human rights commission later this week, said there was a need to refine existing humanitarian legal standards to deal with violence against women.

"The convention on genocide and torture and the Geneva convention, in particular, should be reexamined and utilised in this light," Ms. Coomaraswamy says in her report, a copy of which was obtained by Reuters.

"Sexual violence against women is meant to demonstrate victory over the men of the other group who have failed to protect their women. It is battle among men fought over the bodies of women," the report says.

Ms. Coomaraswamy said the international approach on war crimes against women had changed rapidly in the past years, but still more needed to be done to make people aware of the issues.

"The world is recognising it as a terrible thing. Earlier this didn't happen, but from recognising it to implementing (prosecutions) is still a big step," she added.

The Security Council in 1993 created a tribunal in the Hague during the Yugoslav civil war and another in Arusha, Tanzania, after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

"This is the first time in the history of the world that people are being actually convicted for crimes against women during times of war," Ms. Coomaraswamy said.

In her report, Ms. Coomaraswamy says U.N. peacekeepers should be given necessary training in gender issues before they are sent to troubled areas. She also calls for an international fund to rehabilitate women.

"The international community should have a special fund and project that has as its primary focus the provision of comprehensive service to post-conflict societies," the report says.

Australian senate refuses to pass unamended native title bill

CANBERRA (AFP) — Australia's upper house senate Monday gave Prime Minister John Howard the constitutional trigger he needs to call an early election by amending his government's native title bill.

The amendment, which sought to ensure the bill was covered by the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA), followed a warning by the minister responsible for landrights legislation, Nick Minchin, that it would be rejected.

It was moved by the Labour opposition and passed by 32 votes to 31 with the backing of the centrist Australian Democrats, Greens and key independent Brian Harradine.

Mr. Howard's refusal to accept the vote of former Labour senator Mal Colston, who switched sides last year to support the conservative government, that was crucial to the outcome.

Mr. Colston is facing charges of fraud arising from alleged misuse of his travel allowances.

Mr. Minchin, who is special minister of state, said the government had attempted to meet senate concerns with amendments it had put forward but would not accept a move to make the legislation subject to the RDA.

"The amendments presented to the government on the RDA are not able to be supported by the government," he said.

The amendment was essentially the same as that passed by the senate when it first debated the bill late last year.

In preparing to vote for the Labour amendment, the Democrats and Greens questioned whether there was any point in continuing with the rest of the bill.

"If this particular clause is totally unacceptable to the Howard government, then perhaps we are on the way to the election ... perhaps we should all go home," Democrats Senator John Woodley said.

However, Mr. Minchin ruled out ending debate, saying the government wanted the lower house to consider the senate's version of the bill.

"So we would hope and intend that we have a full debate of this bill and pass the bill, albeit it would appear with some amendments the government may not be able to accept in the House of Representatives," Mr. Minchin said.

Mr. Howard has warned that a second refusal by the senate to pass the bill in substantially unamended form would mean an early election this year.

The bill seeks to largely reverse a ruling by the High Court in a 1996 case brought by the Wik people, which clarified parts of the Native Title Act.

The act allowed Australia's 386,000 Aborigines to claim their native rights to use the 40-to-70 per cent of Australia's land mass, which is under pastoral or mining leases. The Wik decision found that native title and pastoral leases could coexist.

The election must be held by next March, but could be as early as July.

Yeltsin outside Moscow preparing for roundtable

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin was spending Monday at his Gorky-9 country residence outside Moscow preparing for Tuesday's "roundtable" talks with parliamentary and trade union leaders, ITAR-TASS news agency said.

The talks are aimed at building a consensus on the formation of Russia's new government and its programme, but Mr. Yeltsin has made clear he will not compromise over his nominee for prime minister, the little-known Sergei Kiriyenko.

A Kremlin statement said Mr. Yeltsin, who sacked the previous government on March 23, would make opening and closing remarks at the meeting. It is expected to start around midday (0800 GMT) Tuesday.

The speakers of the two chambers of parliament and Mr. Kiriyenko, 35, energy minister in the previous cabinet, are also due to address the meeting, which will be attended by leaders of the main parliamentary factions.

Interfax news agency quoted presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky as saying Mr. Yeltsin hoped the talks would result in a declaration of support for Mr. Kiriyenko's candidacy. The state Duma, Parliament's lower house, is expected to debate and vote on his nomination Friday.

Court tells Yeltsin to sign booty art law

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia's highest court ruled Monday that President Boris Yeltsin must yield to parliament and sign a law declaring that all art works looted by Soviet forces during World War II remain Russian property.

The Constitutional Court, which was brought into the dispute last year as president and parliament locked horns over the trophy art, declared that the Russian head of state is constitutionally obliged to sign the bill given the overwhelming vote in support of the legislation in both houses.

But Mr. Yeltsin stood his ground Monday as a senior aide warned that the Russian president has already complained to the court over the way parliament conducted the war booty vote.

Sergei Shakhrai, Mr. Yeltsin's representative at the Constitutional Court, said Mr. Yeltsin had already lodged his own deposition with the supreme court challenging the vote and arguing that the bill would contravene Russia's international commitments.

The president will, however, have to sign the bill first before challenging it, now that the Constitutional Court has given its verdict.

"Any decision of the court should be carried out, even if it is unjust and legally not correct," Mr. Shakhrai was quoted as saying by ITAR-TASS news agency.

The controversial bill relates to all cultural treasures looted by Soviet forces during World War II, but the majority came from Nazi Germany, and the trophy art has developed into an untimely bone of contention between Moscow and Berlin.

Parliament's efforts to legalise its ownership of the war booty rankle badly in Germany, which has been seeking restitution of the art for years.

The ruling moreover comes at a tense juncture in the perennially difficult relationship between Mr. Yeltsin and the state Duma, or lower house of parliament, and the Federation Council, the upper house, as president and parliament prepare for a showdown over Mr. Yeltsin's recent government shake-up.

The Russian president is due to meet his parliamentary foes in roundtable talks Tuesday on the composition of the new government before a parliament vote later in the week on his controversial choice of premier, the young technocrat Sergei Kiriyenko.

Mr. Yeltsin, mindful of the damage it would cause to Russia's fledgling partnership with Germany, vetoed the trophy art bill last year, only to see parliament overturn his veto.

But the Russian president still refused to sign the bill, arguing that deputies violated voting procedures by resorting to postal votes in order to override his veto. Both president and parliament turned to the Constitutional Court to consider their complaints.

Monday's verdict related to the parliament's claim, with the court still due to rule on Mr. Yeltsin's charges of voting irregularities.

The original law applies to "all cultural treasures brought to the USSR during World War II, whoever their current owners may be or whatever the circumstances under which they were acquired."

It bans "illegal export of this Russian property" and considers the goods "compensation for the damage caused to the cultural heritage" of the Soviet Union during the war against Nazi Germany.

The booty includes 300,000 works of art, including the famed Priam's Treasure excavated in 1873 from the presumed site of the ancient city of Troy, two million books and three kilometres of archives.

After insisting for decades that there were no plundered artworks in Kremlin cellars or the vaults of Russian museums, the country has been gradually bringing the treasures to light in recent years.

Paintings by Renoir, Manet, van Gogh, Degas and Gauguin have all turned up in exhibitions in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, and Priam's Treasure has been given a room in Moscow's Pushkin Museum.

Japan reports rise in foreigners forced into prostitution

TOKYO (AFP) — Police reported a huge rise in 1997 in distress calls from foreign women lured to Japan with the promise of bar hostess work and then forced into prostitution, a news agency said Monday.

Sources in the National Police Agency said the number of foreigners trapped in prostitution who had managed to take their plight to authorities soared to 32 in 1997 from just nine the year before.

In 1995, the total was eight and the year before there were only four, according to unnamed police officials quoted by Kyodo News Agency. The National Police Agency could not confirm the report.

Police officials told Kyodo News the women, mostly from Asia and Latin America, were told when leaving their home countries they were working as bar hostesses in Japan.

But on arrival they were forced to work as prostitutes, they said.

In most cases, the women were told they owed fees for the trips to Japan to their sponsors, many of whom were bar owners. Their passports were also confiscated, police were quoted as saying.

They were kept under continual surveillance and barred from going out except for prostitution, the officials said. All earnings were given directly to bar owners to pay for rent and to repay "debts," the officials said.

Of the 32 cases last year, 15 were women from Taiwan, six from Colombia, and two each from Hong Kong, Thailand and Costa Rica. Kyodo quoted the officials as saying.

The cries for help were received from women who had managed to escape their surveillance and find a police station, and from members of the victims' families who had contacted police overseas, the officials reportedly said.

Japan's "yakuza", or organised crime, is heavily involved in the prostitution racket.

The National Police Agency issued a report Friday saying that 25 yakuza members were arrested in 1997, up from nine in 1996, for assisting in the illegal entry of foreigners.

It said 193 foreign prostitutes were arrested last year, of whom 132 were from Asia, 50 from Colombia and 11 "others." Of the Asian total, there were 61 from Thailand.

The report said 448 cases involved arrests for the illegal entry of foreigners and 40.9 per cent of those cases were related to prostitution or sex bars.

There were a total 3,271 prostitution cases that came to light in 1997, 12 per cent involving foreign prostitutes, according to the police report.

The plight of foreigners forced into prostitution in Japan was highlighted in 1994 by the case of Thai woman Pailin Boonchum, then 24, whose mother appealed to the Thai premier to help rescue her.

Ms. Pailin escaped during a raid by immigration officers.

In an earlier letter to her mother, Ms. Pailin said she was being held in a yakuza-owned bar in Tokyo, that her travel documents had been confiscated and that she was being beaten and forced into sex with drunken customers.

"Japanese men look down on us," she told a Thai newspaper on her return. "There are a lot of prostitutes from several countries in Japan so don't think you can make your fortune there."

The Japanese government has submitted legislation to parliament to ban bar owners from confiscating employees' passports.

Vaccine might work against ear infections

WASHINGTON (R) — A new vaccine that might work against ear infections is safe in babies and does stimulate their immune systems, researchers said Monday.

If it works as planned, the vaccine, being developed by Wyeth-Lederle division, would be the first to prevent ear infections in very young children.

Dr. Margaret Rennels of the University of Maryland medical centre said the PNCRM7 vaccine was safe and stimulated the immune systems of the babies tested.

She said the vaccine could prevent many cases of otitis media, the main kind of ear infection in children.

"We will have the potential to prevent up to 85 per cent of cases of invasive pneumococcal disease and 65 per cent of pneumococcal otitis media in U.S. children," she said in a statement.

Ear infections are no minor matter. They affect 85 per cent of children by the time they turn 3. More than a third of all visits to paediatricians — 24 million visits a year — involve ear infections.

"Traditionally, we have treated these infections with penicillin and other antibiotics," Dr. Rennels said in a statement. "But the alarmingly rapid emergence of strains resistant to both penicillin and cephalosporins has created an urgent need for pneumococcal vaccines that are effective in infants."

Such infections usually clear up on their own. But doctors worried about hearing loss and often pressured by panicked parents who have been listening to their child scream, usually prescribe antibiotics.

Such practice is being blamed for helping the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Experts say overuse of antibiotics has helped the drug-resistant superbugs to evolve, and they say many patients do not take their full courses of antibiotics, which adds to the problem.

A vaccine that stopped ear infections from happening in the first place would help greatly. It would not only prevent disease in immunised children, but would have what immunologists call a "herd effect" — it would stop the spread of the infection in general because there would be less of the bug to spread around.

There is no vaccine to protect babies and young children against streptococcus pneumoniae, which causes pneumonia, ear infections and meningitis. Wyeth's vaccine, which protects against seven strains, is in phase III clinical trials — usually the last step before seeking Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval.

It is formulated to work against seven different strains of S. pneumoniae.

The study, conducted in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Nashville and Atlanta, involved 212 healthy two-month-old infants. Half got PNCRM7 and half got another vaccine as a control.

They got shots at two, four and six months and a booster after a year. "Primary immunisation, followed by a booster shot of PNCRM7, seemed to be acceptably safe and resulted in significant rises in antibody to all seven strains," Dr. Rennels said.

Each year in the United States disease caused by pneumococci is responsible for estimated 3,000 cases of meningitis, 50,000 cases of bacteraemia or blood infection, 500,000 cases of pneumonia and seven million cases of otitis media, according to the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID).

Companies are also working on vaccines against haemophilus influenza, another cause of such infections.

Features

Hi-tech magic

chip talk



By Jean-Claude Elias

Things are not as they are, but as we see them." — John Lennon (1940-1980), British songwriter, singer.

WHEN I was a kid I would gaze for long minutes at the stylus of the turntable while it played a now old-fashioned vinyl LP record. The sight of the minuscule needle in contact with the disc was a source of infinite fascination to me. From the thundering passages of Wagner's operas to whisper-quiet romantic songs, how could such a tiny object, barely touching the surface of the disc, almost floating on it, carry all this quantity of music in glorious stereo high fidelity? Pure magic, I had no doubt about it. By moments the beauty of the mystery would take over my listening pleasure.

Then I grew up and understood technology. Everything became obvious, simple and logical. The magic had gone.

The current state of computers and telecommunications is bringing us magic again, provided we want to see it this way. Given the difference in technological complexity between the hi-fi vinyl record on one hand, and Internet, laser discs and Pentium PCs on the other, it is hard to believe that only 45 years separate them. And yet the explanation is always simple once you have it.

In the late sixties and early seventies, computer engineers were considered a rare breed, with IQ levels believed close to that of Albert Einstein. Now they have become as common as any

other kind of technical people. Actually, because of its sheer precision, the world of digital may be easier to study and understand than other sciences.

A friend recently told me that browsing the Internet was the most exciting, the most fascinating experience for him. Bringing and sending text, life-like colour photos and stereo music instantly, from and to anywhere in the world, in the comfort and privacy of your home, is something "you can't beat" he said. Sometimes, after having found the information he would be looking for, he would just stare at the screen of his computer and think of how all this came to him. The mere thought of how all this complex data travelled through the worldwide network of cables, machines and satellites to reach him almost instantly would send him dreaming.

Other computer users using the same advanced technology may look at it in a more pragmatic way. After all it's all about a few wires, electricity, electromagnetic waves and some mathematics. Nothing that can't be calculated, assembled, disassembled or clearly explained.

Even laser beams are nothing but normal light, amplified and arranged in a certain way. Laser is an acronym for Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation.

To make a living out of my trade, a computer specialist, I have to be pragmatic. By moments however when I come back home in the evening and sit before my computer's screen, John Lennon's words make me wonder.

Observations while spending the winter in Syria

Within the Circle: Parents and Children in an Arab Village
By Andrea B. Rugh
New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, 263 pages

ALTHOUGH ANDREA B. Rugh is an anthropologist and her book is classified as anthropology, it is virtually devoid of the usual social science terminology. This is both a strength and a weakness. In the preface, Rugh states that Within the Circle is not a formal study, but rather "observations while spending the winter in a Syrian village." This is, in fact, what she did. While her husband was assigned to the U.S. embassy in Damascus in 1981-82, she rented a room in the home of a family in a Christian village north of the

Many of Rugh's observations are very interesting. To a great extent, life in the village she describes is indicative of overall developments in Syria. Most of the village men were engaged in construction or trucking — transporting produce between Syria, Lebanon and Gulf countries — since they could no longer support their families solely by farming. This exemplifies the transition in the Syrian countryside from a predominantly agricultural society to a partially service-based one.

On the other hand, several of Rugh's conclusions are questionable. There is an implicit assumption that living patterns in the village are typically rural as opposed to urban, whereas many customs she describes can also be observed in ordinary Damascus homes, though perhaps not among the more cosmopolitan set she encountered there. While she seems aware that

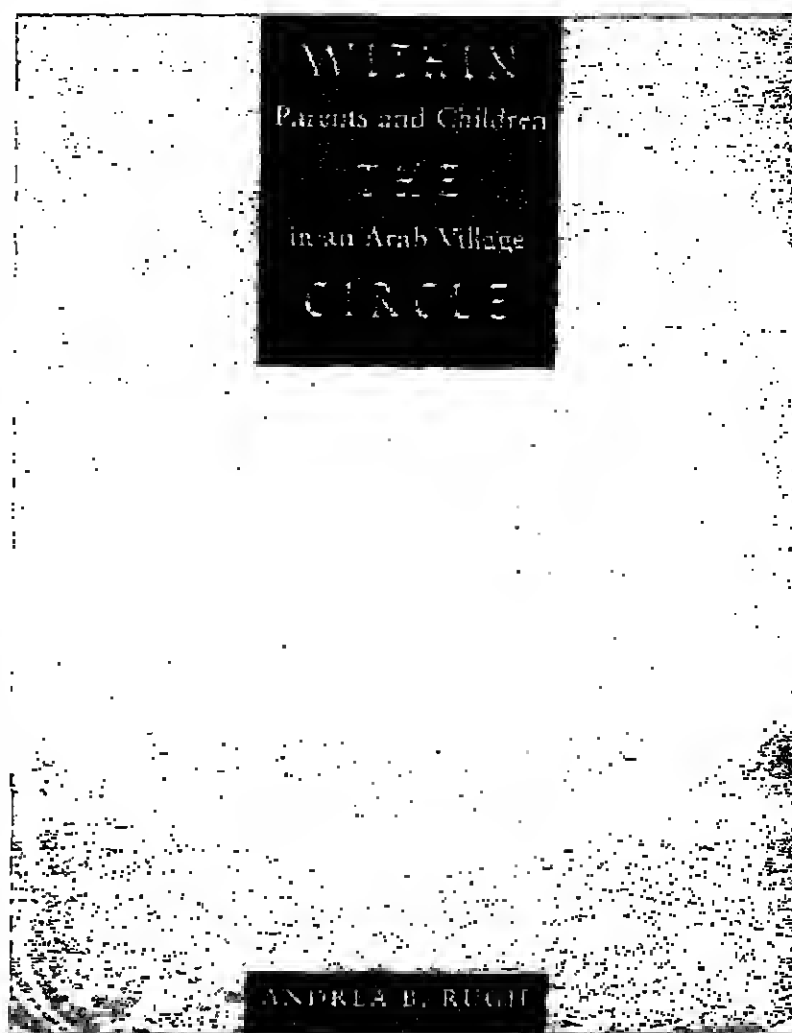
Book Review

family's daily life and was particularly keen to understand how the children were being raised.

Later, Rugh decided to publish her observations with the idea of contributing to ongoing debates about the deteriorating situation of American families. As she states, "if we hope to resolve the problems of family in America, we need to know more about how families in other cultures establish strong ties... what practices and mechanisms hold families together." While it is far from certain that her book will be read widely enough to have the desired impact, it is a positive step towards introducing the Arab family to Western readers, many of whom have little idea of ordinary Arabs' daily life. This ignorance has potentially negative consequences, such as public support for sanctions against Iraq.

being a foreigner influenced her interaction with Syrians, she overlooks the fact that her status as an embassy staff wife may have influenced which class of people she got to know in the first place.

Rugh paints a picture of the Arab family as a highly cohesive, stable unit, as was the family she lived with. She attributes their closeness to a number of factors: A high degree of interdependency in daily life, different but complementary male-female roles, pragmatic childrearing practices, priority to group interests rather than the individual, and parents making virtually all decisions, not offering their children choices. While Rugh admires the harmony she witnessed, she also saw drawbacks like not encouraging independent thinking or creativity, and especially not in female children. She tends, however, to indulge in



generalisations which can easily be countered. (I can refer to a family in the same area where, despite poverty and a semiliterate mother, 10 children have grown up with widely divergent interests; almost all of them — male and female — have embarked on a career, several in the creative arts. They remain a very close-knit family, despite their differences and creativity.)

analyses her observations. She names factors like the spread of modern public education, saying this may in the future affect the monolithic nature of the family she describes, but presents no analysis as to possible repercussions of such changes. In this sense, the book, though interesting, is already outdated, for Arab society, including the family, in Syria and elsewhere, is indisputably in transition.

Sally Bland

Health fears over cellphones spark legal battle

Vast sums of money are being invested in the cellular-phone industry and the satellites and other equipment required to send the signals all over the world. But, the march of the mobiles, reports Gemini News, is running up against concerns that the devices might be harmful to health.

By Gavin Evans

LONDON — Legal challenges are mounting to the global tide of mobile telephones amid fears that they may damage the brain.

The pulsed, microwave radiation from the current generation of digital cellular phones is far more powerful than in the older, analogue models.

Studies in Australia and the United States suggest that exposure to such radiation may cause cumulative damage to DNA genetic material and may accelerate brain-tumour growth and cause headaches, loss-term memory and reduced male fertility.

Many scientists remain sceptical, but health concerns have already prompted legal action in several countries.

In Britain, for instance, the Egyptian-born owner of the prestigious Harrods store, Mohammad Al Fayed, has been granted leave for a judicial review of the granting of planning consent for the erection of a 21-metre cellphone transmitter near his home. His petition will refer to the possible health risks indicated by the Australian and American studies.

In the U.S., a test lawsuit is due to be held in Houston, Texas, in June, brought by the estate of a doctor who died of a brain tumour, allegedly caused by prolonged use of a cellphone. Other cases are pending as litigants await the result.

A British electromagnetic researcher, Dr. Roger Coghill, intends to proceed with a case under the Consumer Protection Act against a local distributor of mobile phones. He said he was taking this action "basically on behalf of the public, who need to be aware of the potential hazard from these phones."

Coghill, who will argue that all mobile phones should carry a health warning against excessive use, added that he would produce scientific evidence of a

range of possible dangers, including damage to DNA and the eye's retina.

Amid the concern, some governments are treading cautiously. New Zealand and Australia have banned the masts from school properties, while some local authorities in California have advised communication companies not to erect their near educational property.

Scientists differ over the health consequences of cellphone radiation. It causes a slight increase in temperature — as in a microwave oven — but this is not thought to be harmful. Con-

"We're not advising people to stop using them because there is no conclusive evidence they cause cancer in humans," says the board's press officer Liz Francis.

"Part of our concern is the lack of epidemiological or biological information on how non-ionising radiation might interfere with the DNA system of humans, but we are keeping a watchful eye, and recognise the need for further research."

New studies in Europe are using human volunteers to research the effects of mobile-phone use on DNA, brain cells, physiology, behaviour and cancer-related processes. And the Australian government is funding a five-year research programme.

Aware of the health concern, some companies are now producing devices which, they say, reduce radiation emissions. The British-based firm Microshield, for instance, makes a leather jacket comprising a metal mesh shield and aerial guard. "Ninety-five per cent of radiation is emitted by the aerial, which is why it is essential that the case protects more than just the body of the phone," says company spokesman Matt van Ast, who says the product — selling for £39.95 — eliminates 90 per cent of radiation.

The German company Hagenek makes similar claims about one of its phones which has an internal antenna covered by a protective shield.

"With the external antenna, the radiation is emitted in all directions, including [towards] the user's head," says Hagenek spokeswoman Marion Menken. "With the internal antenna, radiation is cut to around 10 per cent and the quality of receiving and sending also improves."

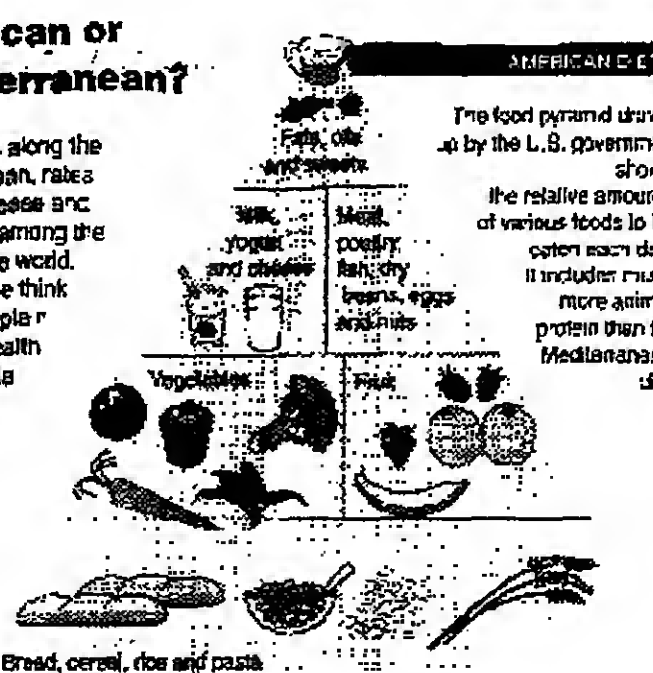
Whether or not cellphone radiation proves to be damaging to health, the devices have been positively linked to another hazard. Britain's Royal Society for the Protection of Accidents has urged motorists not to use them while driving. Crashes all over the world have been blamed on mobile phones.

The writer is a freelance journalist currently based in London. He worked for many years in South Africa for newspapers including the Rand Daily Mail and The Mail and Guardian.

— Gemini News

American or Mediterranean?

In countries along the Mediterranean, rates of heart disease and cancer are among the lowest in the world. Many people think diet may explain the good health of the people there.



A healthy heart lesson from Crete

By Jane E. Brody

NEW YORK — Of 12,000 men in seven countries studied in 1960 by Dr. Ancel Keys, those least likely to develop heart disease lived on the Isle of Crete.

His co-investigator, Dr. Henry Blackburn, professor emeritus at the University of Minnesota, has written that the low-risk Cretan "is a shepherd or small farmer, a beekeeper or fisherman, or a tender of olives or vines," adding: "He walks to work daily. His midday meal is of eggplant with large mushrooms, crisp vegetables and country bread dipped in olive oil. Once a week there is a bit of lamb. Once a week there is chicken. Twice a week there is fish fresh from the sea."

Other meals are hot dishes of legumes seasoned with meats and condiments. The main dish is followed by a tangy salad, then by dates, Turkish sweets, nuts or fresh fruits. A sharp local wine completes the meal.

The near-vegetarian Cretan diet and active lifestyle have undergone significant changes in the past 30 years as the islanders have become more affluent, shifting from farming to business, from cooperation towards competitiveness, achievement and materialism. Cretans now eat less bread, potatoes, fruit and olive oil and more meat, fish and cheese. Dr. Marion Nestle, head of nutrition and food studies at New York University, said "The classic Mediterranean diet is becoming an endangered species."

Among men in Crete, caloric intake is down but calories expended in physical activity have dropped even further. Cholesterol levels, blood pressure, body weight and abdominal obesity are up and so are death rates from heart disease, though they are still much lower than in the United States.

What is the lesson to be learned from Crete, past and present, as well as from all the countries along the Mediterranean, where rates of coronary heart disease and many common cancers are still among the lowest in the Western world? Is the Mediterranean diet, as it is currently being translated for other audiences in popular cookbooks and magazine articles, as healthful as claimed? Should people be drinking lots of wine and dousing their food in olive oil? Must the diet derive less than 30 per cent of calories from fat to be a healthy one?

Throughout this decade, public health experts have been urging Americans to consume a diet that leans heavily on plant-based foods: nine to 11 servings a day of bread and other grain foods and five to nine servings a day of fruits and vegetables. We are as yet nowhere near that, with grains hovering at five servings and fruits and vegetables at three or four servings daily. The American diet is currently top-heavy with unhealthy fats, sweets and meats.

Yet the evidence continues to mount that a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains not only helps prevent heart attacks but also many common cancers, including cancers of the lung, breast, ovary, mouth and throat, larynx, stomach, pancreas and bladder. Healthy elderly Greeks consume more than a pound of fruits and vegetables a day.

The healthy Cretan diet of 1960 was not low in fat. More than 35 per cent of calories came from fat, primarily olive oil, which consists mostly of monounsaturated fatty acids. Because olive oil lowers blood levels of damaging LDL cholesterol without lowering protective HDL cholesterol, it has acquired a reputation as a heart-healthy oil. In 1996, the American Heart Association

amended its advice on dietary fat to emphasise monounsaturated fats like olive, canola and nut oils (up to 15 per cent of daily calories). And two studies in Mediterranean countries have linked olive oil consumption to protection against breast cancer.

But does this mean it can be used indiscriminately? Not if weight control is a problem. Excessive weight raises the risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes and hypertension.

However, a growing number of experts now believe that if a person is physically active and can maintain a normal body weight, consuming more than 30 per cent of calories from fat should not be harmful if most of the fat is monounsaturated.

If not olive oil, then wine is considered by many to be the elixir of heart health. Numerous studies in various countries have found a reduced risk of heart disease and coronary death among those who consume moderate amounts of wine and other forms of alcohol. Moderate means one or two glasses of wine a day or their equivalent. And if you are going to adopt the Mediterranean approach, that wine should be consumed only with meals.

But does it have to be wine? Dr. Eric B. Rimm and Dr. R. Curtis Ellison on the Harvard School of Public Health point out that wine contains two substances, resveratrol and quercetin, that have heart-protective properties over and above other forms of alcohol.

Although they say that proof is lacking that wine is an essential part of the Mediterranean diet, they proposed that "moderate alcohol consumption can be considered a component of a healthy lifestyle — except for individuals who should not consume alcohol."

— The New York Times

Cash woes force change in Saudi Arabian oil policy

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia has reversed its policy of fighting for a bigger market share in a move aimed at supporting oil prices to meet its need for cash to fund growing development needs, analysts have said.

The world's dominant oil power suffered more than other producers when oil prices tumbled to a nine-year low last month and threatened economic gains achieved through high crude prices over the past two years.

The price collapse did not last long as Riyadh was forced to spearhead a drive to cut output by several producers both inside and outside OPEC. The decision, endorsed by the 11-nation group last week,

pushed up prices by more than \$3 and they are expected to continue their rebound.

"To effect, Saudi Arabia has joined Iran's long-standing policy of advocating high prices at the expense of production. You can say it is now a price hawk within OPEC," a Gulf oil analyst said.

"But I believe this situation is temporary. Saudi Arabia will revert to the old policy once its financial problems ease and demand for Gulf oil starts to climb after other supply sources begin to deplete," he added.

Before it began to give priority to market share, Saudi Arabia acted as a swing producer within the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries

(OPEC) during the 1980s, lowering production when prices declined and increasing it when they surged.

But it abandoned that position after boosting output by three million barrels per day (bpd) to make up for a market loss of four million bpd due to the disruption of Iraqi and Kuwaiti supplies during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis.

"After the Gulf War, the Saudis appeared determined to produce a third of OPEC's output ceiling given the vast crude reserves and spare production capacity of the kingdom," an Abu Dhabi-based oil executive said.

"The recent production cuts do not mean that Saudi Arabia no longer cares for

its market share. But at least they show securing more revenues from high oil prices have become its main concern given its economic problems," he indicated.

Saudi Arabia, sitting atop one quarter of the world's extractable oil resources, produced a record 12 million bpd in the early 1980s.

Its market share started to dwindle after new producers entered the market, other OPEC members increased capacity and its own capacity needed in the absence of development and maintenance of its giant oilfields.

Saudi output hit a low of around five million bpd in the late 1980s before it seized the opportunity of Iraq's invasion of neigh-

boring Kuwait to boost production to eight million bpd. Its quota will now be around 8.46 million bpd following its decision to cut by 300,000 bpd last month.

"I think Saudi Arabia no longer minds if oil prices climb to high levels after it felt the pain of low prices this year," an economic expert said.

The kingdom is in a bad need of cash now because of a steep drop in its international reserves and to finance growing development projects, especially in the health, education and manpower sectors," he added.

"It projected high expenditure this year and any major spending cuts would severely hurt growth,

widen the budget and current account deficit and damage investors' confidence in its economy," the expert pointed out.

In statements reflecting new policies, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf oil heavyweights said the OPEC conference they could consider further output reductions if the market fails to react favourably.

But in the long-run, Gulf producers are set to dominate the world market when many other sources outside the region will have disappeared.

"After two decades, they will not have to worry about their market share as they will be supplying nearly half global oil needs," an expert said.

Analysts: Israeli shekel ripe for convertibility

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's sound economic fundamentals should ensure a smooth transition to full convertibility for the shekel despite growing nerves in the country's foreign currency market, analysts say.

"The state of the local economy is ideal for foreign currency reform," said Jonathan Katz, chief economist with Solid Capital Markets.

The government says it will lift most of the remaining foreign currency restrictions with the aim of making the shekel fully convertible on or around April 30, Israel's 50th anniversary.

Officials have refused to detail what areas of the foreign exchange regime will be liberalised and they have made clear some restrictions will remain in place.

But analysts say likely key reforms include ending restrictions on Israeli banks buying shekels with foreign

currency from overseas institutions, raising the ceiling on institutional investment overseas and lifting ceilings for individuals sending money abroad.

Over the past week, market uncertainty regarding the upcoming changes contributed to a 1.3 per cent depreciation of the shekel.

Experts said the lifting of the measures could lead to more volatile trading sessions and to a further shekel depreciation, but added that fears of speculative attacks will prove groundless.

"There's a fear that (entrepreneur George) Soros and others will come and speculate here and they will be able to wreak havoc, but that's unfounded as long as the macro-economic fundamentals are good," Mr. Katz said.

Israel's balance of payments current account deficit fell to 2.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) last year and is con-

tinuing to fall, after ballooning in 1996. Foreign reserves were near a record at \$21 billion at the end of March.

By comparison, Mexico or Thailand — both victims of speculative runs on their currencies — had current account deficits equal to six per cent or more of GDP.

Some experts go so far as to say Israel's fundamentals show the remaining restrictions need to be lifted.

"In terms of the restrictions, Israel is lagging behind other emerging economies such as the Czech Republic," said Ron Gutler, managing director of Bankers Trust (Israel).

"Israel is aware that in terms of GDP per capita and the size and scale of the Israeli economy, it can't hold back, it has to move forward," he added.

But bankers at domestic Israeli banks were more cautious, urging the gov-

ernment to lift restrictions slowly and to maintain the currency peg in order to protect the shekel against a sharp depreciation.

"The more we are exposed to foreign investors the more our vulnerability to them increases. Therefore, the people managing the economy have to take balanced decisions," Shlomo Piotrowsky, managing director of the First International Bank of Israel, said at a recent news conference.

The shekel is now tied to a sloping band based on a basket of foreign currencies. The band was widened in June 1997 to 15 per cent on either side of a midpoint from seven per cent. Officials have said the sloping band will remain in force after the reforms.

Yossi Fraiman, who heads the consulting firm Price Management, pointed to last year's widening of the band as one of several measures the treasury and Bank

of Israel took to ease the shekel into full convertibility.

Other measures, he said, included increasing the amount of dollars banks can hold and gradually liberalising the foreign exchange regime over the past year.

Some economists fret that increased foreign exchange trading and capital outflows will put downward pressure on the shekel.

But others said foreigners could be attracted to Israel's high 12.2 per cent interest rates and its fixed-income market, since a lifting of the restrictions will allow investors to hedge shekel-denominated investments.

"It could be that in the initial stage the shekel will strengthen as a result of investors who also want to benefit from Israel's high interest rates," a dealer at American-Israel Bank said.

While the consensus points in favour of a more liberal currency regime,

experts concede some potential problems do exist.

"Taxes on Israeli investments abroad are higher than similar investments in Israel. This could be a deterrent for exploiting liberalisation, but on the other hand this could encourage illegitimate capital flight because deregulation will allow them to get around (the obstacles)," said Assaf Razin, a professor of economics at Tel Aviv University.

"The big question is will taxes be reformed?" he added.

And geo-political uncertainty is still a wild card.

"A political catastrophe here could be a trigger for (a crash)," said Mr. Katz. "If foreigners lose confidence here, then that could lead to the same effect as what happened in the Far East or Mexico in 1994."

Number of rich people growing in India

NEW DELHI (AP) — Despite an economic slowdown, India's middle class is growing and creating a big market for consumer goods, a survey of the economy has said.

India, where 70 per cent of the people still live from agriculture in small villages, has traditionally been a nation of poor people, with a small middle class and a tiny group of very rich.

But the middle class in the year 2000 could be double that in 1996 if the economy grows by 6.4 per cent

annually, said the survey by the New Delhi-based National Council of Applied Economic Research, a privately-funded respected research group.

The council set a middle class income at 96,000 rupees (\$2,460) annually, enough to sustain a family and still have income to spend on non-essential consumer items.

Growth has slowed to five per cent in the financial year that ended on March 31, compared to 7.5 per cent in the previous

year, which may effect the report's predictions.

Even so, the number of middle class households will balloon over the next decade and could transform the income structure of Indian society, according to the survey of 300,000 households.

Middle class households were projected to grow from 7.7 million in 1998 to 23.2 million in 2007.

As a percentage of India's population, which is approaching one billion, the high earners would comprise 11.7 per cent, com-

pared with 4.5 per cent now, the report said.

The number of households with earnings of more than 215,000 rupees (\$5,510) would grow to six million by 2007 from about one million, assuming the growth rate returns to its previous level.

The findings will be welcomed by multinational companies selling relatively expensive products in India. Many have been burned by initially overestimating the size of the middle class and have also been hurt by the economic slump.

Meanwhile, Indian trade and industry bodies have advised the country's new Hindu nationalist government to get down to work.

"The government should now... deliver on its promises to prevent the economy from slipping into a crisis," said V. Raghuraman of the Assocam, an industry association.

He said the new coalition government had an unenviable task before it.

"The economy is in a gloom-doom scenario," he added. "Business confidence is sharply down.

Industrial growth and exports are very depressing."

New Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha said recently that economic growth in the year to March 1998 would be down to five per cent from an earlier projection of seven per cent.

He said the fiscal deficit would be 6.1 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) as against the targeted 4.5 per cent.

The Indian economy has been in a slowdown for almost two years.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Slow down and pay attention to details. If you're not good at that, get someone else to do it for you. Those minuscule details can make the difference between success or failure, sometimes even life or death.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're doing well today, although it may not feel like it. You're being pulled in a couple of directions. Go with the flow. That appears to be towards the familiar and away from an attractive new idea. Stick with the tried and true.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) A hassle at home could interfere with work. Don't worry. Your boss will understand. He or she might even help you figure out how to solve the problem. Since yours is the sign of communication, you might as well talk about it.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You're learning a lot, and hopefully not the hard way. Be especially careful with your money. Put off your trip until Sunday, at least. Meanwhile, gather data instead. The more information you get, the better a decision you'll be able to make.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There's money coming into your account today, especially if you ask for it. If you're in business for yourself, it wouldn't hurt to send out your bills. If you're dependent on someone else, discuss an increase in your allowance.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Finally, people are noticing how important you are. Unfortunately, they're also laying more demands on you. Actually, yours is the sign of service, and today you'll get to do exactly that.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Share the information you've gathered on a need-to-know basis. You might be able to prevent your partner from making a hasty judgement and taking off in the wrong direction. That wouldn't be the first time he or she has done something like that.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) An older person, needs something you can provide, and he or she will pay for it. The better you do it, the more people you can provide services to, and the more money you'll make. This is how millionaires are made.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Where you'd like to stay in the privacy of your own home. Unfortunately, you have a job that needs doing. Don't ignore your responsibilities or you could lose up a very lucrative deal.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Race around and finish chores this morning. Later, on you could get a chance to go out. You want to have domestic matters settled by then. A startling revelation tonight could change travel plans. Listen to the weather report.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Gather up your resources and pay on overdue bill; you'll be amazed at how much easier the rest of the day goes. If you can't pay the full amount, send a big chunk of the money. The guilt has been getting in the way of your creativity.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) A friend, possibly a partner, likes to tell you what to eat, how to talk, how to dress, etc. Don't you just love it when this happens? If you at least pretend to welcome the advice, you'll make points and the next few days will be a lot more fun.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

W/...
Business
HOR...
FORECAST FOR...

Major Currencies & Cross Rates
Currency USD DEM GBP SFR
\$ Dollar 1.0000 1.8420 0.9375 1.3663
£ Mark 0.6420 1.0543 0.3364 0.5361
DM Sterling 1.0543 0.0663 0.3364 0.5361
FF Franc 2.5547 120.60 0.3364 0.5361
¥ Yen 0.0074 1.3663 0.4456 0.7361
\$ Dollar 0.7122 1.2988 0.4275 0.6361
L Lira 1.0000 1.0724 0.5362 0.8361
S Gulder 1.4820 0.0074 0.2393 0.3361
S Franc 0.1922 0.2393 0.2393 0.2393

REUTERS
The Business

Major Currencies & Cross Rates
Currency USD DEM GBP SFR
\$ Dollar 1.0000 1.8420 0.9375 1.3663
£ Mark 0.6420 1.0543 0.3364 0.5361
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L Lira 1.0000 1.0724 0.5362 0.8361
S Gulder 1.4820 0.0074 0.2393 0.3361
S Franc 0.1922 0.2393 0.2393 0.2393

Energy
Oil Last revised
Bbl 13.12 13.62
Crude 13.52 13.64
Gas 13.12 12.65
Coal 12.10 12.15
LNG 100.00 151.00

Currency
SA Ryal 0.5000
AE Dirham 0.3673
KW Dinar 0.2861
BH Dinar 0.3760
CY Pound 0.2036

Metal Prices
Metal Bid Offer
Gold (oz) 369.2 369.7
Silver (oz) 5.37 5.4
Platinum (oz) 410 412
100 Months 1457 1420
200 Months 1715 1718
300 Months 1715 1715
400 Months 832 832
500 Months 5345 5356

Main Equity Index
Source Index Value
New York DOW JONES 9236.96
London S&P 500 1114.48
Tokyo FT-SE 100 1114.48
Paris Nikkei 225 15758.98
Frankfurt CAC 40 3386.73
DAX 3271.44

JORDAN M...
DAJA...
STUDIO...
Professional...
1 hour...
Develop your...
at our shop and...
JUMBO ph...
30% larger...
Free...
20 x 30 cm...
Shmiesaru...
Grindlays...
Phone: 560...
Swedish Tel...

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Play parts
- Hossage-taker
- Tuck's partner
- Nastase of tennis
- Constrained state
- Pursue with passion
- Trilled in reverse, backwards?
- Go in the red
- Away from home
- Heart-chart letters
- First among men?
- Landscape dip
- Marsh grass
- Maturing
- King novel, with "The"
- Cowboys' sch.
- Peruvian peaks
- Clear the windshield
- Russian saint
- Bottled spirit?
- Mach+ gets
- Floggers or G
- Takes the edge off
- Light touch
- Mark of disgrace
- Seclusion
- Spills the beans
- Location
- Stadium roof
- Cell substance letters
- Straw hat
- Actor Wallace
- Shift setting, backwards?
- New wing on a plant
- Conceive
- Wrongful act
- Fella
- Yogi and Dale
- Wundee dagger

DOWN

- Vard opera
- Pitch symbol
- Polynesian figurine
- Leave the Union
- Concealing
- Social insect
- Lapdog, briefly
- Light nels
- Silvan people
- Johnny
- Flipped over, ascending?
- Corn Belt state
- Voice
- The George and "Show"
- Dancer De
- Millie
- Called off
- Lead balloon
- Chess pieces
- Ali
- Ascending, ascending?
- Family subgroup
- Group of eight
- Beau
- Missile garages?
- Corner
- Plane curves
- Singer Sumac
- Shankar's instrument
- Chale
- Doctrines
- Speak scornfully
- Have opinions
- Earthen jar
- Culture base
- Stratford's river
- That, and no more
- Cornie Johnson
- Chest bone
- Greek letter

Peanuts

IT STARTED TO RAIN, AND EVERYONE RAN HOME. THEN IT STOPPED RAINING, AND EVERYONE CAME BACK. THEN WE STARTED PLAYING AGAIN... THEN WE LOST.

MAYBE SOMEDAY YOU'LL GET USED TO LOSING.

WELL, MAYBE NOT.

Andy Capp

READY WHEN YOU ARE, FLO.

WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU DO IN THE SWIMMING CLUBS?

MAJLY EXERCISES.

SHOULDN'T YOU BE WEARING LOOSE-FITTING CLOTHES TO EXERCISE IN?

I HAD CLOTHES THAT WERE LOOSE. I WOULDN'T BOTHER GOING TO THE CLUBS. WOULD I?

YOU TRY.

Mutt'n' Jeff

WHAT WE NEED ARE SOME GOOD CHARACTER WITNESSES TO GET YOU OFF THE HOOK!

THAT LET'S YOU OUT!

THINK! DON'T YOU GOT AN UNCLE WHO WOULD TESTIFY IN YOUR BEHALF?

WELL, COME ON! LET'S GET HIM!

I DON'T THINK THEY'LL LET HIM OUT!

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

GIASBERGEN

"If we kiss longer than 10 seconds, my mind starts making a grocery list."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

PODOR

SOUDE

HERNUT

YARVOS

Answers tomorrow

Yesterday's Jumbles: BRIBE AVAIL WOEFUL COBALT
Answer: How he felt while roofing the police station — ABOVE THE LAW

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) The work is getting easier. You'll have more energy for play this evening. You and your partner have had a difference of opinion. If you bring a few others into the conversation, a plan of action will become obvious.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Avoid being sucked into a controversy. All you care about is whether the job gets done and who gets paid at the end of it. The others may have the fancy rhetoric, but you've got the bottom line figured out. Don't let them get to the way of your work.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Turn down a group activity this evening for a more private conversation. You and an attractive person have ideas to exchange. If you go out, go to a place you've never been before. You don't need to hang with the gang.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Your workload is intense and borders on the bizarre. Later this evening, a difference of opinion with an older person leaves you rattled. To top things off, you could get uninvited company. Pick up some munchies on the way home, just in case.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You have a zillion errands to run. You may even have to cancel a trip. Actually, travel is not well aspected today. You'll need to drive both assertively and defensively at the same time — or just stay home with a good book.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You tend to feel like you could have done the job better, or you're getting paid too much. The perfection you're trying to achieve exists only in your imagination. Actually, your work is light-years ahead of anyone else's. Relax.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You'll get a lot of attention today, along with several good offers. People are starting

to realise just how good you are at what you do, not mention how cute you are. Your focus has been on the job, but that's under control by now.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You've gathered up a lot of information in the last few weeks. You've probably got some other people's secrets stashed away, too. You like to use them as bargaining chips. Find one that will help clear up a misunderstanding.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) A loved one, roommate or sweetheart has a problem with a friend you're visiting. It could be simple jealousy or a strong difference of political opinion. You can see both points of view, and you're a master communicator. Act as the referee.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Put information you've learned recently to use. A person in a position of authority will find it impressive. This could result in an increase in your paycheck. It's almost certainly going to cause more opportunities to develop.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is a good day for travel. The hard part is over. What you're facing now are just a few minor complications. Don't let them get you down. Your experience will prove very useful again.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Money is a major focus today, specifically money you share with other people. This includes credit cards and other bills you owe. Don't get worked up over how you're going to pay them. Instead, look around for another source of income.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

IMF has limited reserves to respond to new crises

WASHINGTON (AP) — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has limited reserves to respond to any new financial crisis because it has already committed billions to Asian financial bailouts, IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus said.

He said he expected Congress to approve a U.S. administration proposal to provide the IMF with \$18 billion in new funding.

Speaking at the National Press Club, Mr. Camdessus said the 182-nation organization he has led for 11 years cannot act in an emer-

gency unless it has adequate resources.

"There are still major risks in the world economy," he said. "Thus it is a matter of concern that the IMF's usable resources have dropped to a level that leaves us little room for manoeuvre to respond to a new crisis."

He said he was confident the United States, the largest contributor to the IMF, "will maintain its leadership by supporting the IMF."

Last year, the IMF put together rescue packages worth more than \$100 bil-

lion for Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea, committing \$32 billion of its own reserves. Treasury officials estimate it has only \$15 billion in available funds for any new crisis.

The Senate approved new IMF funding by an 84-16 vote last week. House action is expected after the Easter recess.

Replying to criticism that the IMF was caught off guard by the economic troubles in Asia, Mr. Camdessus suggested four areas where it could work with member countries to prevent future crises.

They are improving financial information the countries make public, strengthening domestic financial systems, encouraging capital flow liberalisation and fighting corruption.

Mr. Camdessus said the Asian financial crisis raised questions about "whether the fund should blow the whistle on a country it thinks is heading" for trouble.

He said giving such warnings could be dangerous because the predictions could be wrong or help touch off a crisis.

"It is far better for market

participants to come to their own conclusions," he said.

He said the private sector needs to be more involved in government efforts to resolve debt crises and avoid the problem of investors making risky decisions because they expect to be rescued by the IMF.

To laughter, Mr. Camdessus, a career civil servant, took issue with Senate majority leader Trent Lott's description of him as a French socialist, waving his speech at the audience and asking if "all of this sounds socialist."

Turning to world economic developments, he said Asia will not emerge from financial crisis unless Japan takes forceful steps to rebuild its sluggish economy and reform its shaky banking system.

He also warned that the IMF would not hesitate to suspend a \$43 billion rescue package it is renegotiating with Indonesia if President Subarto's government failed to meet its commitments.

Meanwhile, the worst of Asia's financial crisis is over for most of the region, a senior IMF official has said.

IMF First Deputy Managing Director Stanley Fischer said conditions had already improved in much of the region and would brighten in Indonesia provided it followed through on economic reforms expected to be announced this week.

"Already for Thailand, for Korea, for Malaysia, for Philippines, it's improving significantly," Mr. Fischer told reporters.

"There's another year of hard work," he said. "The financial part of the crisis is probably over for most of countries of the region, the worst of the financial crisis."

Mr. Fischer, who was in Indonesia last week negotiating the third IMF accord with that country since last October, said the fund could offer "magic turn-around" for ailing nations.

"You have to keep doing the programme before you get the benefits. That's what we'll see in Indonesia. If they get on with the programme, we'll have seen the worst of this crisis," he said.

South East Asian economies have been battered by steep declines in currencies and share prices since a regional financial crisis erupted last July.

Mr. Fischer was asked if problems in Japan would spark a new wave of currency depreciations across Asia.

The yen dived to its lowest level in six years on Friday after rating agency Moody's Investors Service revised the outlook for Japan's credit to negative from stable.

This came on the back of the worst reading of business confidence in more than three years and a pronouncement by the chairman of Sony that Japan was "on the verge of collapsing."

"I don't know what's happening today in Japan," Mr. Fischer said. "I'll be visiting the area in a couple of days and may be better informed at that point."

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You and your teammates will have to know how to play the game in order to win this one. Your focus has to be completely on the task. Promise a loved one something special later, to make up for time not spent together now.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're up against difficulties again today. These problems are not insurmountable. You'll have to set priorities, but you don't need to do it all by yourself. A well-organised loved one will be a great asset.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Everybody's interested in your private life today, but that's OK. You enjoy the attention and appreciate the help. Domestic issues are interfering with your work, but it doesn't seem to be much of a problem.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) To achieve the position you want and deserve, you're going to have to practice. This could turn out to be fun, since it is your talent area. If it's not fun, you're obviously not doing the right thing — or you're not doing it the right way.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There could be quite a lot of money coming into your account today. This is not entirely by accident, although some of it may be. This is also good day to get your jewelry reassessed. Some of those heirlooms may be worth more than you thought.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You seem to attract attention. That's not necessarily what you want. If it's any comfort, you virtually disappear when you're doing your job well. When your ego gets out of the way, there's nothing there but your skill and your desire for perfection.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) What's the most important thing in your life? Odds are, it's not what you've been doing lately. The most important thing probably has something to do with serving others. Contribute to making the world a better place and you'll feel better, too.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Focus on something other people need, again. You might be able to get rid of a few outgrown household items in the process. By donating your castoffs to a worthy cause, and volunteering your helps as well, you can do a valuable service.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your career demands all your attention and then some. You have the information you need, but you may not know how to access it. Just do the best job you possibly can right now and the rewards will be numerous.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) There may be difficulties, but you'll be travelling soon. Allow time for delays, detours or inclement weather. Don't dip too deeply into your resources, however. Use your brains instead of your chequebook to get what you want.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There's money going out today, possibly to pay taxes. If you go over the records again, you could save a little more. If you've got an accountant working on this project with you, request another review before you sign the cheque.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Instead of resisting a person who's been nagging you, turn the situation around. This one knows how to do several things better than you do, so why don't you simply ask him or her to do a few chores for you? Give it a try.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Practice makes perfect. You want to get on to other things, but the first item on your list has to be done over and over to get it just right. Don't consider that time wasted. The knowledge is sinking in; you'll never forget it.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You might be in a good mood today, but that's not true of everyone. One person in particular is about to snap. That one doesn't have much patience to begin with. Don't let someone else's lack of planning create an emergency for you.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You're juggling 20 or 30 responsibilities at the same time. Not only do you have business decisions to make, but you need to change things at home. You'd better hustle. You could be having company against tonight — someone you really want to impress.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Your mind is like flypaper. Every detail that lands on it gets stuck. Sort through those details and file them, so you can find them later. That's true of the stuff in your office, too, not to mention your filing cabinet.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There's money coming in, but lots of things to spend it on. Be careful or you could squander your profit before you even make it. Travelling with friends is tempting and might even be possible. You'll have to exercise wisdom to keep it from wrecking your budget.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You have to do what everyone else wants. It's the path to your greatest destiny. The problem for the past week has been that you don't have boundless energy. Things have been stacking up at an alarming rate.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Now that you know what to accomplish, all you need is a list. Some tasks could be done next week and some could be delegated to others. Once you have the mess sorted out, you'll discover more time for yourself. Share it with a friend this evening.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Somebody out there needs your expertise. Old skills you haven't used in a while could make a big difference. Pass them along. Of course, you'll have to deliver them in person. An opportunity should arise today. Watch for it.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) The push for success is still intense. It might feel like someone else is pushing you, and that's wonderful. You may wonder whether or not to proceed, but don't worry. Might as well relax and go with the flow.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your experience pays off again. Something you've done before gives you the skills you need to be successful. A roommate gives you a shove in the right direction, too. Heed advice you get from home, even if it's something you don't want to hear.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) The lesson you've been learning lately has to do with money, organising things and watching details. Get a Virgo to help tidy up during the day so you can relax and go out tonight. You've had enough stress for one person lately.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Your friendly local critic offers advice on how to run your life. Instead of resisting, thank that person and ask if he or she has any other advice for you. This could not only stop the nagging, but improve a couple areas of your life.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Prices as at 6/04/98 19:17

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.8420	0.6010	1.6278	134.73	1.4180	1817.80	2.0748	6.1735
DE Mark	0.5428	1.0000	0.3280	0.8282	73.12	0.7896	988.22	1.1260	3.3505
GB Sterling	1.6640	3.0663	1.0000	2.5420	234.20	2.3586	3024.46	3.4621	10.2715
CH Franc	0.6847	1.2050	0.3929	1.0000	88.12	0.8277	1189.04	135.71	4.0381
JP Yen	0.0074	1.3668	0.4466	1.1334	1.0000	1.0622	13.48	163.92	4.8908
CA Dollar	0.7082	1.2986	0.4235	1.0788	1.06	1.0000	1261.42	1.4624	4.3621
FF Lira	0.0008	1.8124	0.3302	0.0840	1386.88	0.7798	11.40	3.3936	1.0000
NL Guilder	0.4820	0.8877	0.2895	73.64	64.90	0.6834	876.04	1.0000	2.9783
FR Franc	0.1620	0.2983	0.0973	24.7388	21.81	0.2297	33.80	33.6000	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7080	3.7503	0.3770	3.6408	0.3062	3.6727	1628.00	3.4180
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2886	0.6317	5.1351	0.4319	5.1801	2155.15	4.8209
Saudi Riyal	0.2686	0.1891	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.0816	0.88	407.43	0.9114
Bahrain Dinar	2.95	1.8807	9.9483	1.0000	9.86	0.8122	9.74	4053.27	9.9688
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1947	1.0301	1.0301	1.0000	0.0841	1.01	419.69	0.9388
Kuwait Dinar	3.2658	2.3155	12.2479	1.2312	11.89	1.1189	11.89	4980.20	0.9388
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0206	0.9913	0.9834	1.00	416.04	0.9307
Lebanese 1000	0.65	0.4640	2.4544	0.2467	2.3827	0.2004	2.4036	1.0000	2.2389
Egyptian	0.2926	0.2074	1.0972	0.1103	1.0662	0.0896	1.0745	447.05	1.0000

Energy

Oil	Last	Settle
Brent	13.12	13.65
W. Texas	15.52	16.04
Bonny	13.12	13.65
Dubai	12.10	12.15
UL Gas	150.00	151.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2686	0.4913	0.16024	0.40756	36.9844
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.50166	0.16363	0.41919	36.7148
KW Dinar	3.2658	6.01685	1.9271	4.98251	440.335
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.88709	1.58413	4.05515	357.864
CY Pound	1.8577	3.4228	1.1152	2.8384	250.355

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	309.2	309.7
Silver (oz's)	6.37	6.4
Platinum (oz's)	410	412
AL (3 Months)	1417	1420
CU (3 Months)	1715	1715
Zinc (3 Months)	1121	1125
Lead (3 Months)	592	593
NI (3 Months)	5345	5350

Libor Fixing

Period	-1-	-3-	-6-	1-
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.6797	5.7344	5.7734	5.8515
GBP	7.4948	7.5825	7.5825	7.5825
JPY	0.7083	0.7917	0.8021	0.8229
DEM	3.6249	3.7240	3.8298	3.9688
FRF	3.5313	1.7500	1.8333	2.0000
CHF	1.8838	3.6182	3.7185	3.9063
ITL	5.7080	5.8840	5.8840	5.8840

Main Equity Indices

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
New York	DOW JONES	9034.96	53.55	0.6	9094.76	8985.9	8983.41
New York	S&P 500	1124.55	1.95	0.17	1131.99	1122.57	1122.7
London	FT-SE 100	6106.8	41.5	0.68	6115.8	6040.7	6064.2
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	16705.99	188.21	1.21	16788	16488.3	16517.8
Paris	CAC 40	3988.76	64.73	1.63	3986.76	3928.12	3932.02
Frankfurt	DAX	5271.65	48.13	0.92	5290.25	5255.94	5223.52

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Amman hosts 4-nation rugby tournament

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — There's nothing unusual about the venue of Jordan's next sports championship — Al Hussein Sports City. However, it is the actual game that will take you by surprise.

Rugby in Amman. Yes, fans of the game will be exhilarated April 9-10 by the Four Nations Rugby Championship to be held here for the first time.

The Jordan Rugby Football Club (JRFC) has invited teams from Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan to compete in this event.

"Not so many Jordanians have knowledge of our existence," coach Mike Sedman told the Jordan Times.

"Prior to the Gulf war there was a rugby club in Jordan made up of expatriates and one Jordanian," he explained. "But now we have two teams half of which are Jordanians."



HRH Prince Abdullah (centre) attends the JRFC team practice prior to the April 9-10 tournament (photos by Roufan Nahhas)

Cronin, then second secretary at the British embassy in Amman.

"The advertisement did its job by getting interested people and the JRFC was therefore born again," Sedman pointed out.

The former team took part in Dubai Sevens Tournament in 1989 but

tournament," captain Farah Nushaiwat told the Jordan Times.

Vladimir Dodokh, a Jordanian newcomer to the game said that it is a one-team game.

"It takes a lot of team spirit and toughness to play this game," he said.

Amer Nabulsi, the youngest player in the field expressed his excitement of being part of the whole event.

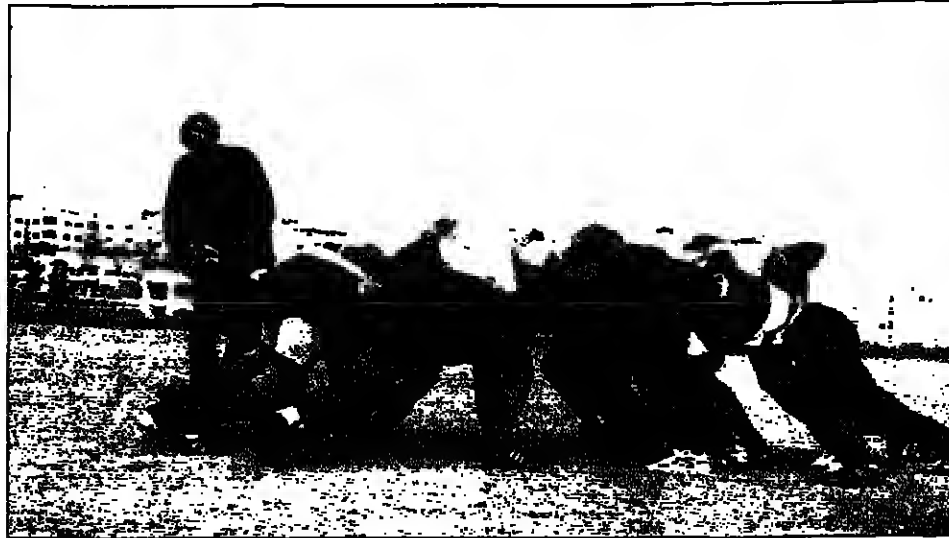
"I am only 17 years old and it feels great to play as one team."

Cyprus has two teams entered in the event. Jordan will also take part with two teams — Jordan Falcons and Jordan First.

"The reason behind the two teams participating is simply because we have more players than ever," Nushaiwat said. "And in the game to indulge everyone in the field we mixed the experienced with the inexperienced," he added.

Each team consists of 15 players — eight forwards and seven backs.

HRH Prince Abdullah



The newly-formed JRFC team

He added that the idea was resurrected in 1994 through an advertisement in the Jordan Times by Martin

started 1996 with a whole new concept.

"It was quite an experience and we did well in the

who attended the training sessions will be playing with the Jordan First team.

Players started training in mid-1996 on a small plot of grassy land within the British embassy grounds.

The weekend event will inaugurate the new ground which was donated to the JRFC by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

"Prince Hassan kindly allowed us to use an old polo ground in the Sports

City which was transformed into a rugby pitch," Sedman said.

The trophy will be named after his Royal Highness Prince Abdullah who will attend the two-day tournament.

"The winner will carry the Prince Abdullah Trophy which we hope it will become an annual event," Sedman said.

In the event of a tie for places in either league, the winner will be the team with

most tries scored, said Sedman adding that if each team has an equal number of tries the winner will be the team that scored the fastest try in their first game.

The excitement never ends.

"Fans will be able to enjoy a spectacle of a parachute drop Friday prior to the trophy final and admittance is free for the public," he added.

Programme of events:

Thursday April

Episkopi Eagles v Cairo

Jordan v Beirut

Cyprus Stags v Episkopi Eagles

Jordan Falcons v Jordan

Cairo v Cyprus Stags

Beirut v Jordan Falcons

League 1

League 2

League 1

League 2

League 1

League 2

1000-1110 a.m.

1115-1225 a.m.

1230-1340 p.m.

1345-1455 p.m.

1500-1610 p.m.

1615-1725 p.m.

Friday April 10

Loser League 1 v Loser

for "Wooden Spoon Trophy"

Runner Up League 1 v Runner Up

for the British Bank Plate Competition

Parachute Drop

The Prince Abdullah Trophy Final

Winners of League 1 v Winners of League 2.

League 2

League 2

League 2

League 2

League 2

League 2

League 2

League 2

1000-1230 a.m.

1245-1415 p.m.

1430 pm

1445-1615 p.m.

SCOREBOARD

Spanish League

Real Sociedad 1

Sporting Gijon 1

Valladolid 4

Racing Santander 2

Real Mallorca 1

Tenerife 0

Salamanca

Espanyol

Compostela

Celta Vigo

Merida

Real Zaragoza

Portuguese Championship

Academica Coimbra 2

Rio Ave 1

Desportivo Chaves 2

Vitoria Guimaraes 0

Benfica 2

Vitoria Setubal

Campanhairens

Vazim

Maritimo

Belezenes

NBA

LA Lakers 105

Washington 88

Cleveland 94

Minnesota 97

Indiana 93

Chicago 109

Philadelphia 116

Utah 99

Boston 102

Sacramento 105

Seattle 87

Detroit

Orlando

LA Clippers

Atlanta

Milwaukee

Houston

Toronto

Vancouver

New York

Dallas

Denver

NHL

Ottawa 1

Ny Rangers 2

New Jersey 3

Florida 3

Anaheim 3

Buffalo

Chicago

Phoenix

Pittsburgh

Calgary

American League

Philadelphia 2

Los Angeles 1

Milwaukee 5

NY Mets 7

San Diego 8

Chicago Cubs 7

Houston 6

Arizona 3

Atlanta

Cincinnati

Florida

Pittsburgh

St Louis

Montreal

Colorado

San Francisco

National League

Texas 6

Baltimore 6

Tampa Bay 5

Minnesota 10

Cleveland 6

NY Yankees 9

Boston 10

Toronto

Detroit

Chi White Sox

Kansas City

Anaheim

Oakland

Seattle

Bulls beat Rockets: Hawks, Pistons lose

WASHINGTON (AP) — Red Strickland had his third triple-double of the season and Derek Harper missed a tying 3-point shot with six seconds left as the Washington Wizards won Sunday's fringe-of-the-playoffs showdown, 88-85 over Orlando.

Strickland had 21 points, 13 assists and 11 rebounds for the Wizards (38-37), who moved into sole possession of ninth place in the Eastern Conference, one-half game behind the New Jersey Nets (38-36) in the battle for the eighth playoff berth.

The Wizards, who beat the Magic for the first time in four meetings this season, have won two in a row after a four-game losing streak. Orlando (37-38) has lost three straight.

Lakers 105, Pistons 103, OT: In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Shaquille O'Neal scored 35 points and Nick Van Exel scored 11 of his 19 in the fourth quarter and overtime to lead the Lakers to a comeback victory.

Detroit lost its sixth straight despite Grant Hill's 27th career triple-double. Hill had 18 points, 16 rebounds and 11 assists but shot just 4-for-17 from the floor.

Eddie Jones added 17 points and O'Neal grabbed several of his 12 rebounds at crucial moments for the Lakers, who came back from an 18-point, third-quarter deficit.

Los Angeles won its fifth straight, including four straight on the road for first 4-0 trip since February 1987.

Cavaliers 94, Clippers 93: In Cleveland, Shawn Kemp, returning from a one-game suspension, scored 25 points and rescued the sluggish Cavaliers down the stretch as Cleveland escaped with a victory over Los Angeles.

The Clippers nearly came all the way back from a seven-point deficit in the final 30 seconds, but were unable to foul over the final eight seconds as Cleveland managed to run out the clock.

Kemp scored 10 of the Cavs' last 15 points and Wesley Person had 16

points for the Cavs, who have won six of seven and 10 of 12 as they try to build momentum heading into the playoffs.

James Robinson scored 26 points, Isaac Austin had 24 and Lamond Murray 23 for the Clippers.

Pacers 93, Bucks 92: In Indianapolis, the Indiana Pacers tied the franchise's NBA-era record with their 52nd victory of the season, beating Milwaukee when Michael Curry missed a last-second jumper.

The Pacers, who have won 52 games in three of the past four seasons, made 30 field goals and 30 free throws in a close game that featured 20 ties and 22 lead changes.

Reggie Miller led a balanced scoring attack with 18 points. Derrick McKee, Chris Mullin and Antonio Davis added 16 points each as Indiana swept the four-game season series from Milwaukee for the first time ever.

Timberwolves 97, Hawks 96: In Atlanta, Stephen Marbury flipped in a shot with 23.4 seconds remaining as Minnesota rallied to beat Atlanta.

The Hawks had a chance to win, but Dikembe Mutombo came up short on a 8-foot (2.5 meter) hook shot with three seconds left and the horn sounded while Blaylock and Minnesota's Kevin Garnett battled for the loose ball.

Marbury scored only nine points but had 13 assists. Sam Mitchell led Minnesota with 22 points and Garnett added 18.

Atlanta dropped three games behind Charlotte in the race for home-court advantage in the first round of the playoffs.

Bulls 109, Rockets 94: In Houston, Michael Jordan scored 40 points and Scott Burrell and Scottie Pippen led a fourth-quarter surge as Chicago extended its winning streak to 12 games — the longest in the NBA this season.

Jordan already had 30 points and was on the bench to start the fourth quarter when Burrell and Pippen teamed up to combine for Chicago's next 22 points and give Chicago its seventh straight road win.

Jordan, who shot 18-of-31, returned with 6:01 to go and scored the next 10 Chicago points — including a one-handed alley-oop dunk off a 26-foot pass from Pippen to reach 40 with 1:56 left.

It was the 11th time this season Jordan scored 40 or more.

76ers 116, Raptors 104: In Philadelphia, Allen Iverson scored 36 points as Philadelphia recorded its highest point total of the season.

Iverson flirted with Philadelphia's first triple-double since 1995, clipping in nine rebounds and eight assists as the 76ers won their third straight. The 76ers' previous high point total was 115 against Vancouver on Jan. 1.

Derrick Coleman, who has averaged 23.4 points in seven games since returning from an ankle injury, scored 21, while Theo Ratliff had 16 points, eight rebounds and six blocks.

Jazz 99, Grizzlies 93: In Vancouver, British Columbia, Karl Malone scored 11 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter as Utah hung on to defeat Vancouver.

Malone, who shot 10-of-16 from the field, also added six assists and five rebounds. Jeff Heryack contributed 17 points and five assists. John Stockton had 11 points and eight assists and Greg Ostertag pulled down nine rebounds in 19 minutes.

The win kept Utah tied in the loss column with Seattle in the battle for the best record in the Western Conference.

Kings 105, Mavericks 99: In Sacramento, California, Sacramento snapped a 12-game losing streak Sunday night as seldom-used guard Chris Robinson, replacing the injured Mitch Richmond, scored a career-high 22 points.

Otis Thorpe had 22 points and 15 rebounds as the Kings snapped the franchise's longest losing streak since it moved to Sacramento in 1985.

Robinson, acquired in a February trade with Vancouver, played the entire second half and shot 9-for-15, including 3-for-5 on 3-pointers,

with three assists, three steals, two rebounds and no turnovers.

Michael Finley scored 23 points for the Mavericks.

Celtics 102, Knicks 92: In Boston, the Celtics opened a 28-point lead four minutes into the second quarter, led by at least 10 the rest of the way and sent the Knicks to their fourth loss in five games.

Antoine Walker had 24 points and Ron Mercer 21 for the Celtics, who won their third straight.

Terry Cummings came off the bench to score a season-high 23 points and Allan Houston added 20 for the Knicks, whose hold on East's seventh playoff spot grows more precarious with each loss.

New York's lead over eighth-place New Jersey, which stood at 3 1/2 games when the weekend began, has been cut to two games.

SuperSonics 87, Nuggets 83: In Denver, Vin Baker scored 21 points, including two baskets in the final minute, as the Seattle SuperSonics had to struggle past Denver, keeping the Nuggets at nine victories.

The Nuggets (9-66) have seven games remaining to get one victory, which would guarantee they won't equal the worst record in NBA history. Philadelphia's 9-73 mark in 1972-73.

Denver's Cory Alexander, who scored a season-high 25 points, hit a 3-point shot with 1:45 left to make it 79-79.

Gary Payton, shooting only 3-of-15 to that point, made a 3-point shot with 1:28 remaining, and Baker made it 84-79, tipping in a missed shot by Sam Perkins with 46 seconds to go.



Chicago Bulls' Michael Jordan (L) drives past Houston Rockets' Clyde Drexler during second half action. Jordan scored 40 points as the Bulls beat the Rockets 109-94 (Reuters photo)

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PHILADELPHIA '1'	PHILADELPHIA '2'	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 2	GALLERIA 1	Hisham Yanes Theatre					
Yusra & Ilham Shahin ... in	Morgan Freeman & Ashley Judd ... in	The biggest cinema production	ISMAILIA RAYEH GAI - KAMANANA	ABDOUN	ABDOUN	STARTING APRIL 6TH					
DANTELLA (ARABIC)	KISS THE GIRLS	TITANIC	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	GRAND OPENING TITANIC	GRAND OPENING TITANIC	Don't Laugh Please We're Jordanian					
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:00, 3:00, 7:00, 10:30 p.m.	Adel Imam & Yusra ... in RISALA ILA AL WALI	Shows: 11:00, 2:00, 5:15, 8:30, 12:00	Shows: 3:30, 7:00, 10:30	Starring Hisham Yanes, Amal Dubbas, Rania Kundi and the group					
			Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 7:00, 9:00, 11:00		The film is also on at 12:00 a.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays	at 8:30 p.m.					
						For reservations call: 4640155, 4625155					

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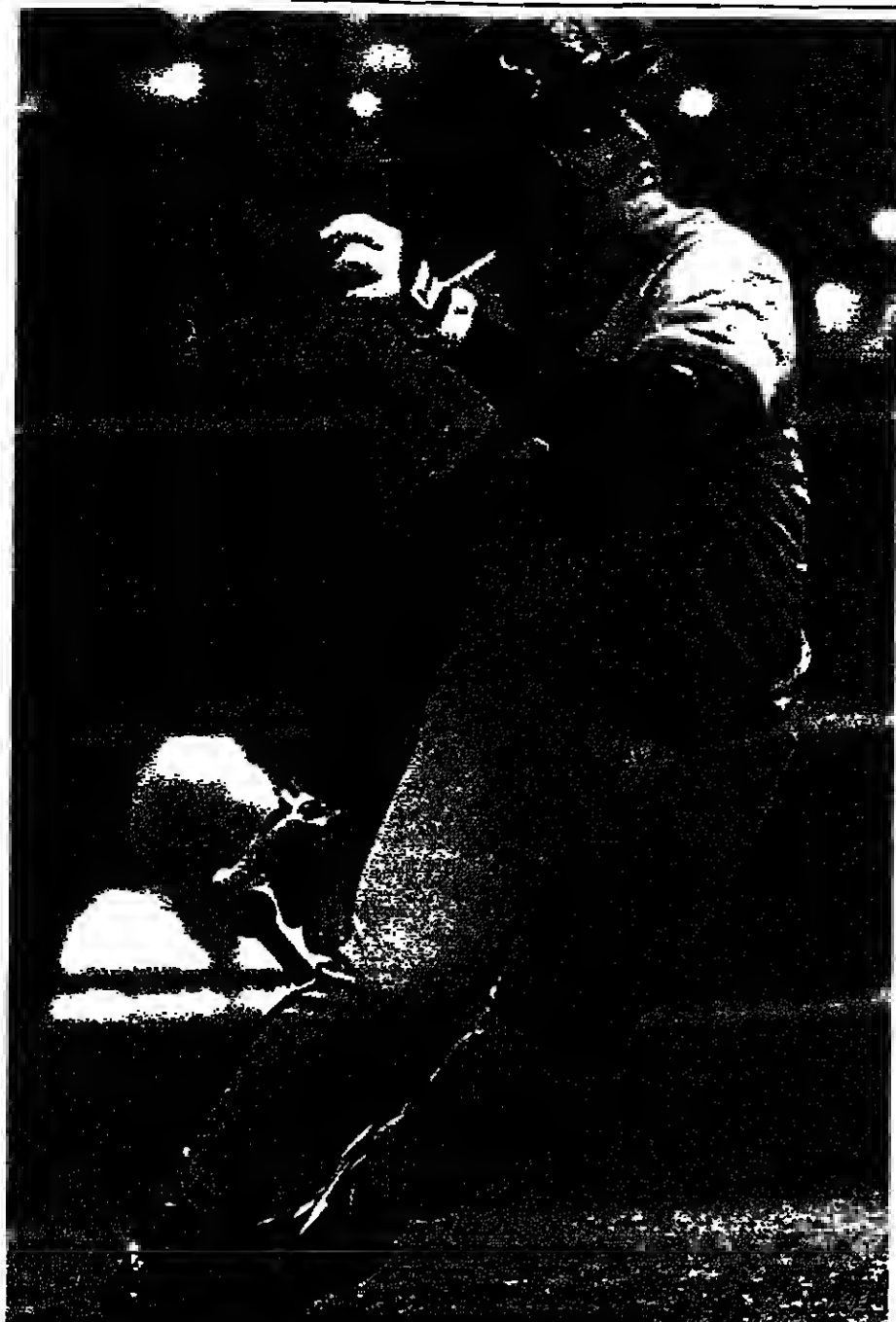
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Cincinnati
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San Francisco

San Francisco
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San Francisco



San Francisco Giants Bill Mueller flies out to deep center in the third inning against the Arizona Diamondbacks. Mueller accounted for all the Giants runs, hitting home runs in the first and sixth innings, but the Diamondbacks managed to win 3-2 for the expansion team's first victory (Reuters photo)

Shearer sets up Wembley showdown with Gunners

LONDON (AFP) — Alan Shearer fired Newcastle into an FA Cup final showdown against Arsenal after both Premier League sides saw off tough first division opposition on Sunday.

Shearer secured Newcastle's first FA Cup final for 24 years with the only goal of the game against Sheffield United while Arsenal reached their 13th FA Cup final with a 1-0 win over Wolves.

A place in the European Cup Winners' Cup is all but guaranteed for Kenny Dalglish's Newcastle as Arsenal look set to finish in the top two of the Premiership and enter the Champions' League.

The victory provided a much-needed boost to morale for Newcastle whose season has been beset by problems on and off the pitch, but could now end in glory at Wembley on May 16.

England captain Shearer, who missed the first half of the season with a serious ankle injury, struck after 60 minutes for a goal that he and Newcastle thoroughly deserved for their domination.

Shearer met a perfect cross from the left by former England international John Barnes with a powerful downward header which goalkeeper Alan Kelly did well to keep out.

But Shearer pounced on the loose ball to smash the winner into the back of the net and spark scenes of wild celebrations amongst Newcastle's huge travelling support.

Newcastle's appearance in the May 16 final at Wembley will lift some of the gloom at the club at the end of a traumatic season which has seen the team slump towards the Premiership relegation zone.

Problems on the pitch have not been helped by the scandal surrounding chairman Freddy Shepherd and vice-chairman Douglas Hall chairman who were forced to resign after allegedly mocking the club's fans, players and the women of Newcastle.

Newcastle boss Dalglish paid tribute to the disgraced directors, saying: "The two guys that helped to bring me

here, Freddie and Doug, have not had the best of times recently.

"But I'm sure this result will have given them a little bit of happiness after all the hardship they have been through."

But the former Liverpool and Blackburn boss said the Wembley appearance was also a reward for the loyalty of the club's long-suffering fans.

He added: "Obviously the players are happy, but they are more pleased for the supporters because they know they have deserved better than what we have been serving up in the league."

"A day out at Wembley is not too bad a result for some of the performances we have put in and now we can look forward to what should be a great day."

Meanwhile, Arsenal reached the final and stayed on course for the Double courtesy of a blunder by veteran goalkeeper Hans Segers.

The title-chasing Gunners were gifted a lead they rarely looked like surrendering after just 12 minutes when Segers kicked his goal clearance straight to man-of-the-match Patrick Vieira.

The French international midfielder, magnificent in the centre of midfield, made the most of the error when

he fed Liberian international Christopher Wreh who coolly dispatched the winner.

Arsenal went on to control the game and despite an improved second half performance by Wolves, the Highbury outfit kept their composure to reach their first FA Cup final since they beat Sheffield Wednesday in 1993.

The victory also keeps alive their hopes of landing the Double — a feat achieved only five times in the history of English football, once by Arsenal themselves in 1971.

Arsene Wenger's side are currently second in the Premiership, three points behind Manchester United but with two games in hand.

Wenger, who made 21-year-old Senegal-born Vieira his first Arsenal signing — from AC Milan — at the start of last season, said: "They all did well, but I must say Vieira was outstanding and in very good form now."

"He has always won the ball but his distribution of it is so much better now and today he showed how well he can pass."

"It's no surprise to me that he has so much ability. I saw it in him very young and knew he only needed some slight improvements to become a great player."

Rafter, Becker to take part in Indian Open

MADRAS (AFP) — Ailing world number four Patrick Rafter of Australia has been made top seed for the \$405,000 Indian Open ATP event starting here on Monday night.

Organisers were confident Rafter, whose viral infection contributed to Australia's shock Davis Cup loss to Zimbabwe on Sunday, will be fit to make his first appearance on Indian soil.

Fellow Australians Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde are seeded second and third in the singles, but it is their doubles encounter against India's Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathy that home fans are relishing.

Also making his first trip to India is three-time Wimbledon champion Boris Becker, heading towards retirement and now ranked 63rd in the world but who remains a sentimental favorite with Indian fans.

Sweden's Mikael Tillstrom returns to defend the title he won last year. He is seeded fifth behind Becker and ahead of French pair Jerome Golmard and Arnaud Clement.

"This is the best field to step on Indian soil," said former Davis Cup star Vijay Amritraj. "Frankly, we could not have asked for more in the third year of the event."

Injuries and illness, however, threaten to spoil the country's biggest tennis event.

Besides Rafter, local hero Paes is recovering from a shoulder injury which forced him to miss the weekend's Davis Cup clash against Italy.

"I am still not fully fit," Paes said. "The doctors said I needed two more weeks to recover but there was no way I was going to miss this tournament."

Paes said he would be playing both singles and doubles, despite the energy-sapping heat and humidity.

"I know everyone is looking to our meeting with the Woodies in the doubles," he said. "Both Mahesh and I promise a treat for our fans."

Spanish press up in arms over UEFA 'Hold-up'

MADRID (AFP) — The Spanish press accused UEFA, European football's ruling body, of a "Hold-up" on Monday following Sunday's 1.3 million Swiss francs (\$866,000) fine of Spanish champions Real Madrid following controversy at their European Cup semi-final match last week.

Both sporting dailies 'AS' and 'Marca' ran similar headlines of "UEFA came armed with a gun: it's a hold-up," following UEFA's fine and their ruling that Real must play their next two home European matches 300km away from the Bernabeu

Stadium. Real, who beat Borussia Dortmund 2-0 in the first leg match, were fined 300,000 Swiss francs for taking over an hour to replace a goal that collapsed due to fans pulling at the hoarding it was attached to.

UEFA, though, took an even dimmer view of Real selling too many tickets for the match (85,000 as opposed to the 72,000 permitted for safety reasons) and fined them a million Swiss francs.

Despite Marca denouncing UEFA's decision as "capricious and dictatorial" which struck at the heart "of the

prestige of all European football" AS did acknowledge that the punishment, which Real are to appeal against, would force Real Madrid to revamp the "scandalous way it was run."

"It is necessary sometimes to take a step back and admit there are deficiencies and start on the road of radical changes," national daily El Pais wrote.

El Mundo went further saying it was a "warning to every club that financed neo nazi supporters such as the Ultrasurs, who quite often had their opinions posted up outside the ground."

Tennis on-court coaching gets mixed reviews

HONG KONG (AFP) — The introduction of on-court coaching in men's tennis met with mixed reviews from players after the opening matches of the \$340,000 Hong Kong Open here on Monday.

For the first time in ATP-Tour history, coaches are being allowed on court in between sets to offer advice to players in an extended two minute break.

But first round winners and losers had differing views on the trial-run after matches at Hong Kong's Victoria Park Stadium.

Fifth-seed Vincent Spadea, who declined to nominate a coach, was sceptical about on-court coaching after crashing out 6-1, 6-3 to Australia's Sandon Stolle.

"Personally, I don't think it's that incredible an invention. It's not like it's a major thing," a disappointed Spadea said. "You can't instruct anyone in a serious manner over the duration of one changeover," he added.

"In a sport like boxing the coach plays a part because they have more contact

with the athlete. In tennis it's such a minimal time ... I don't see it as such an incredible improvement," the world-ranked No.62 said.

But Spadea's opponent Stolle praised the initiative after his win.

"I think it's a great idea. If you're in a bit of trouble you can get a bit of advice to help you out," Stolle said.

Coach Julian Villamarin also gave on-court coaching the thumbs up after watching his player Oscar Burrieza score a 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) win over Australia's Michael Tebbutt.

"For a player like Oscar coming to Hong Kong for the first time it's great. It made him feel a little bit more at home on the court," Villamarin said.

On-court coaching is being used on a trial basis at five ATP-Tour events this year with Hong Kong the first event to introduce the system.

America's Michael Chang, who won last year's Hong Kong Open, is the top seed for this week's event following the withdrawal of world number two Pete Sampras.

Wynalda out four weeks with leg injury

SAN JOSE (AFP) — Forward Eric Wynalda, the leading scorer in the history of the U.S. national football team, sprained ligaments in his left leg Sunday and is expected to be sidelined for a month.

Wynalda, who plays for the San Jose Clash, was injured when he collided with Dallas Burn goalkeeper Garth Lagerwey in a 3-2 defeat in a Major League Soccer game.

Wynalda, 28, sprained the ligament that connects the left tibia to the fibula in the lower leg. Clash spokesman Rick La Plante said X-rays of the left knee showed no damage, but Wynalda was expected to miss three to four weeks.

Wynalda is the Americans' highest hope for goals for the World Cup in France this summer. He has a U.S. record of 31 goals in 97 internationals.

One of only two players who played in both the 1990 and 1994 U.S. World Cups, Wynalda played just 14 games last season with San Jose after undergoing groin surgery.

He will probably miss the trip to Austria for the national team's warm-up game on April 22 in Vienna.

Wynalda may be able to play in a May 30 friendly match against Scotland, the Americans' final tune-up for the World Cup.

The United States open their World Cup on June 15 against European champions Germany in Paris. They also play Iran and Yugoslavia in Group F.

'World's fastest woman' race signs top three 100m sprinters

BEIJING (AFP) — Organisers of a race to crown the "world's fastest woman" in China have signed the three medalists from the 100 metres world championship, it was reported on Monday.

Wang Xuanqing, vice president of the Chinese Athletics Association, was quoted as saying U.S. champion Marion Jones, runner-up Zhanna Pintusevich of Ukraine and Sevetheba Fyues of the Bahamas had finalised contracts.

But U.S. sprinter Gail Devers, the dual Olympic champion at 100m, is still holding out, he said, adding: "We are still waiting for her to make her final decision."

Wang said any runner setting a new world record in the commercial race would

be awarded a bonus of one million yuan (\$120,482).

The event is to be held in a 30,000-capacity stadium in Chengdu, capital of the southwestern province of Sichuan.

Already-signed 200m Olympic silver medalist Susanthika Jayasinghe is still among the invitees despite the Sri Lankan runner's involvement in a recent doping scandal. She failed a test for performance-enhancing steroids last month but has alleged her urine samples were tampered with.

Sri Lanka's amateur athletics association is supporting her appeal for retesting.

In addition to five foreign sprinters, three Chinese will run, including Li Xuemei, who clocked the second-

fastest 100m of 1997 with a surprise 10.79 in last year's Chinese National Games.

The event is similar to a multi-million dollar 150m showdown last June between the 100m Olympic champion and world record holder Donovan Bailey of Canada and American Michael Johnson, the gold medalist in the 200 and 400 metres.

But paychecks are reportedly far less, with Xinhua quoting a "reliable source" as saying Jones would receive an appearance fee of about \$40,000.

The Bailey-Johnson "world's fastest man" race in Toronto ended up a bust, with Johnson collapsing on the track because of a pulled leg muscle halfway through the race.

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U.N. official: Plans for next palace visits under study

BAGHDAD (AP) — U.N. arms experts and diplomats will determine the frequency and procedures for future visits to Iraqi presidential sites after analysing data from their first inspection, the top U.N. envoy in Baghdad said Monday.

The experts last week completed the first-ever inspection of eight of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's palace compounds, made possible under an accord negotiated in February by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Under the accord, some 20 senior diplomats monitored the weapons inspectors' activities.

Prakash Shah, a U.N. under-secretary-general named by Mr. Annan as his special representative to Iraq, told a news conference that a decision on

subsequent visits "will have to be taken on the basis of the initial visits."

While the accord specifies the need for follow-up visits, it leaves open to interpretation their scope and timetable.

Mr. Shah said the diplomats and the experts will soon submit a report to the U.N. Security Council and to Mr. Annan on the outcome of the inspections concluded last Thursday.

"There is mention of subsequent visits in [the accord]," Mr. Shah said. "But what they will be, if they will be or when they will be or how many they will be [is] a decision that will depend on the report of the initial visit," he said.

The U.N. weapons inspectors said they found nothing incriminating at the palace

compounds. Iraq had denied U.N. inspectors access to the palaces on grounds of national sovereignty, but opened them up under the accord signed by Mr. Annan on Feb. 23.

The United Nations imposed trade sanctions on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The Security Council has said they will not be lifted until weapons inspectors certify that Iraq has eliminated its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons as well as long-range missiles.

Mr. Shah said nobody in the United Nations looks at the sanctions regime as never-ending. But lifting the sanctions, he said, "is a process. It is not an event." The initial visits to the presidential palaces were part of that process, he said.

Israelis protest administrative detention of Palestinians

HAIFA (AFP) — Several dozen Israelis demonstrated Monday in front of Damun Prison near the northern city of Haifa, demanding that Palestinians held in administrative detention be freed or tried.

The demonstrators are members of the Open Doors movement, which fights against administrative detention and seeks to bring together Israeli families and those of the detainees, a spokesman for the group said.

"We are demanding that the prisoners be released or given the right of a real trial, because administrative detention is an intolerable infringement of human rights,"

the spokesman said. About 200 Palestinians are being held in administrative detention without trial, which is permitted under emergency laws for periods of six months and is renewable.

Several of the 53 administrative detainees at Damun Prison have been held for more than five years and of these, a few have recently had their terms extended for another six months.

An additional 150 Palestinian administrative detainees are imprisoned in Megiddo in northern Israel.

Israel airs controversial TV show on Palestinian cause

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli television aired a documentary Sunday surveying Palestinian attacks after the 1967 war that has sparked protests of right-wing politicians who say the film is too sympathetic to "terrorists."

The "Biladi, Biladi [My country], Path of Terror" segment of the "Tekuma" [Renaissance] series takes some footage from old PLO recruitment films, showing Palestinian fighters training as glorified heroes.

The documentary is one of the first made and aired by Israeli public television to present the Palestinian side in the attacks that killed dozens of Israelis beginning in 1967 when the Jewish state occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We made a decision that what was taken by force, would be taken back by force," Hisham Abdul Razik, a member of the PLO at the time who is now a Palestinian Legislative Council member, told the

filmmakers. The show presents the story of Mr. Razik and others in their fight to gain back Palestinian land lost in wars with Israel at any cost.

Rehavam Zeevi, a member of the Israeli right-wing Mokedet Party, said the series airing on the occasion of Israel's 50th birthday should give Israelis a sense of pride, not serve the Palestinian cause.

"This is totally unprofessional," Mr. Zeevi said in a programme after the show's airing. "Anyone who sees this doesn't know we beat the terrorists. The director was serving the cause of the PLO."

Gidon Ezra, a Likud member of parliament, said the documentary presented the Palestinians involved in attacks "as fighters, when they are terrorists."

The film interviews Israeli victims who survived such attacks at the 1974 massacre of 22 Israeli children in Maalot, northern Israel when the government did not give in to demands to

free Palestinian prisoners. But the documentary is also laced with interviews with Palestinians, PLO propaganda films and the Palestinian anthem, Biladi.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat is also quoted several times in the film, both in his calls for violence and in his more conciliatory statements such as one in 1974 where he called for the establishment of a Palestinian state "on any part of Palestine that will be liberated or from which Israel will withdraw."

The writer-director of the segment, Ronit Weiss-Berkowitz, who has received threatening phone calls for her part in the film, said she had intended to present the views of both sides.

But Sufian Abu Ziada, who oversees the Israeli desk in the Palestinian National Authority, said he wasn't impressed.

"There is nothing new in this," Mr. Abu Ziada told the television after the film. "This took only a little truth out from under the table."

Bust of slain Israeli prime minister smashed in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — A bust of slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin installed in a park in the provincial capital of La Plata just south of here was smashed by unknown vandals, authorities said Sunday.

The statue — erected to honour Rabin, slain in

November 1995 in a bid to derail the Mideast peace process — was discovered by a passerby, who reported it to a local Jewish organisation.

On new year's day, damaged headstones were found in a Jewish cemetery in Ciudadela, a city near the capital, the

Delegation of Israeli Associations of Argentina (DAIA) said.

The tumbled headstones and damaged photographs of the deceased were similar to Christmas Eve vandalism at the town of La Tahlada, 15 kilometres west of the capital.



HOODED PENITENT IN SPAIN: A solitary hooded penitent crosses a bridge in Seville on Sunday to take part in a traditional Holy Week procession. The tradition, which stems from the 15th century, originally allowed sinners to take part in the processions without being recognised by friends and neighbours (AP photo)

France, Britain to become first nuclear powers to ratify test ban treaty

PARIS (AP) — France and Britain were to formally ratify a treaty banning nuclear tests on Monday, becoming the first nuclear powers to do so.

The two nations were to present their documents ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty later in the day at the United Nations, raising the number of ratifying nations to 13.

"We call on all the other states to join us," Michel Duclos, the French Foreign Ministry's deputy director on disarmament, told a daily news briefing. He called on the leading nuclear powers "to show an example." At least 44 nations must ratify the treaty before it can take effect. The treaty, signed in September 1996 by 149 states, is currently before the U.S. Senate.

France's Senate ratified the treaty in March. Mr. Duclos said that regardless of whether the treaty is ratified, "other countries can only feel linked to it" due to the number of nations that signed it.

A watchdog system of 351 monitoring stations, based in

Vienna, is to begin by the end of the year, with or without ratification, he added.

The treaty includes provisions for verification and international surveillance, but Mr. Duclos acknowledged it doesn't ban computer simulation used in the United States and developed by France.

France specifically urged India, Pakistan and Israel to ratify the treaty. Known as "threshold states," they are believed to have nuclear capability.

France staged a widely criticised series of test blasts in the South Pacific in 1995-96. Mr. Duclos said Monday that France had the right to conduct those tests.

The Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty, he said, recognises France among the five nuclear powers and thus authorised it to ensure "the reliability of its nuclear arms." Other states that ratified the treaty include Austria, the Czech Republic, Fiji, Japan, Micronesia, Mongolia, Peru, Qatar, Slovakia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Turk premier warns Islamists before Muslim feast

ANKARA (AP) — In remarks issued for a major Muslim holiday, Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz warned Islamists Monday not to challenge Turkey's secular system.

Under pressure from the staunchly secular military, the government has been carrying out a crackdown on Islamism.

"No one should make a mistake like threatening Turkey's secular traditions," said Mr. Yilmaz in a statement to mark the Muslim feast of sacrifice, a national holiday. "We can't allow Turkey to be dragged backward."

Mr. Yilmaz's warning came at a time when security forces were preparing to help a pro-secular association collect sheepskins during ritual sacrifice, a move intended to cut off a big source of income for Islamist institutions.

In recent years, Islamist groups have been collecting the skins, whose overall sale brings in about \$4 million.

The justice ministry has ordered prosecutors to strictly enforce a law which calls for up to six months in prison for unauthorised collections.

The Islamic daily Akit said Monday that police warned Islamist institutions throughout the country Sunday not to engage in sheepskin collections.

Japan relives wartime past with confessions from army officers

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan relived its wartime past Monday with confessions from army officers confirming the forced prostitution of Asian women and use of biological weapons against Chinese civilians.

The 1956 depositions of Hikaru Suzuki, then a lieutenant general of the Japanese Imperial Army, received wide play in Japanese media ahead of his publication in a monthly magazine next month.

Suzuki's evidence was given to a war crimes trial in China investigating acts committed in the country from 1931 to the Japanese surrender in August 1945, said the depositions reported for the first time Sunday and Monday.

He admitted to abducting some 140 Chinese and Korean women to force them to provide sex for Japanese servicemen during the war, the reported depositions said.

The deposition was among 1,000 pages of confessions from him and 44 other former officers and bureaucrats of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo, established in China's Manchuria from 1932-1945.

It was obtained by 56-year-old Japanese photographer Toshio Arai from the archives of the Fushun prison in north-eastern China, where Japanese war criminals were incarcerated, according to the weekly

magazine Sekai. The magazine, which is to carry excerpts from the confessions, said the photographer obtained the documents "with special permission," according to the reports here.

Among the other confessions were those of Masaru Uesaka, another army officer who admitted the Japanese forces used gas contaminated with bacteria in attacks against Chinese civilians in central China's Hebei.

Hideo Sakakibara, a former officer of Unit 731 — established by the Japanese to conduct chemical and bacteriological experiments on prisoners in north-eastern China, admitted producing germs including typhoid, cholera and other infectious diseases.

The daily Asahi Shimbun published extracts of former high-ranking officers including one, identified as "A," who said: "We trained young soldiers to execute their victims by ordering them to practice by beheading young Chinese prisoners."

Another officer, "B," admitted taking part in the executions of "more than 5,470 people" and to "torching and destroying more than 18,000 homes."

"The survivors must hate me so much and I cannot find the words to express my regret," he was quoted as saying.

The Japanese government

has never formally accepted blame for the recruitment, often forced, of Asian women to act as prostitutes for Japanese soldiers.

Some politicians and government members have in past years even denied there was any forced recruitment of such "comfort women."

As many as 200,000 Asian women, mainly Koreans and Chinese, were recruited as prostitutes for the Japanese army.

In 1996, the Japanese government set up a private fund to compensate such women but many victims, particularly in South Korea, have refused to accept money that does not come from the state, along with a formal apology.

Only a few of about 300 known survivors in the Philippines, South Korea and other Asian countries have accepted the compensation of \$15,000 from the fund.

At least 20 million Chinese died in the Japanese invasion of their country, according to official statistics from Beijing. Japan has never provided its own estimate.

Some 969 Japanese were incarcerated in Fushun prison from 1950-1956. Forty-five were found guilty of war crimes but none of the sentences exceeded 20 years' imprisonment.



Ghost of Hemingway stalks Cuban estate

HAVANA (R) — The ghost of U.S. novelist Ernest Hemingway is terrifying Cuban employees at his former estate-turned-museum outside Havana, according to witnesses.

One former employee told how the author's ghost used to emerge when there was a full moon and pursue him down a track at the Finca Vigia Estate, Prensa Latina reported.

Another told how on dark nights Hemingway's ghost would whisper in his ear, while a third left the estate's main key hanging on a palm-tree and fled home after spotting the deceased author.

Cuban authorities seem to think those ghoulish accounts will enhance the tourist appeal of the estate, but the three employees have taken a less positive outlook — and resigned.

Bardot saves drug-smuggling donkeys

ATHENS (AP) — Brigitte Bardot went out of her way to help some smugglers. She asked Greek authorities to take care of 14 mules found carrying automatic weapons and hashish from Albania.

The actress said the beasts are innocent and deserve good care. Some hay and a nice clean barn would be nice, too.

In a letter to the Greek Embassy in Paris Bardot called on authorities to "find a favourable solution for the 14 innocent animals." The mules already have been sent on their way, none the worse for wear. "We informed the foundation that the mules were fed, watered and repatriated," the public order ministry said.

Nepal's parliament given new dress code

KATHMANDU (R) — Bathrooms slippers, jeans and funky glasses are no longer allowed in Nepal's parliament. Under new regulations, signed into law by King Birendra, members of the house have to wear the traditional skin-tight slacks, knee-length shirt, matching Western jacket and cap during parliamentary sittings.

In the past, only government ministers have voluntarily worn traditional Nepali dress, while deputies turned up in informal wear. "Some [came] with sandals or bathroom slippers, one went to the extent of coming barefoot... and some dared to step in clad in jeans and funky glasses," said the Kathmandu Post.

Elvis star leaves Hollywood boulevard

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Elvis has left the boulevard. Persistent cracking in Elvis Presley's Hollywood Walk of Fame star forced a jackhammer crew to remove it from the spot where it's been attracting fans for 38 years.

Walk of Fame administrators can't figure out why Presley's star keeps cracking. Until they work out why, the Elvis star will be relocated a few blocks west — next to the stylized gazebo featuring actresses Dolores Del Rio, Anna Mae Wong, Dorothy Dandridge, Mae West and Marilyn Monroe.

"I thought about moving Elvis in front of a fast-food restaurant," joked Johnny Grant, Hollywood's honorary mayor. "But he'll like being over there with the women."

Ono plans surprise calls at exhibition

LONDON (AFP) — John Lennon's widow Yoko Ono plans a few surprise calls at an exhibition she's holding in Edinburgh. According to The Times, visitors to the exhibition of wishing trees, beams of light and other mystic displays may speak to the woman herself, on a video telephone link.

"She plans just to ring up at random regularly through the day and explain to people about the works," an organiser told the paper.

Hollywood returns to Iran after two decades of Islamist prohibition

By Mehrdad Balali
Agence France Presse

TEHRAN — Hollywood movies, long despised in Iran as the epitome of "decadent" Western culture, have returned to Iranian television for the first time since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

More than a dozen American action films from the 1970s and 1980s were shown on the state television's five channels during the two-week new year holiday, starting March 21, along with locally-made revolutionary and war propaganda.

Although a few American comedy classics, such as the silent works of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, have previously been shown in the Islamic republic, there had been a total absence of recent American and European productions. This year, however, the public was surprised to see such hits as

Steven Spielberg's "E.T." and hi-tech action films such as "Robo Cop," three minutes of which was cut before being aired. There was even a Karate genre movie played by the late Chinese-American Kung Fu star Bruce Lee, although such productions were previously shunned as "nonsensical violence."

The programming shift comes amid a relatively more open atmosphere prompted by the election of moderate President Mohammad Khatami in May. Although Khatami's government does not control the radio and television organisation, his more liberal ideas have influenced various institutions, including the media.

The greater diversity is also in response to widespread audience discontent over the stern and austere programmes aired since the revolution on the radio and television and the immense appetite for American entertainment in Iran, where many remember U.S.-

made movies and television series broadcast before 1979. To their great chagrin, Iranian movie-goers have also been deprived of Hollywood productions since the revolution, except for occasional films which portray the struggles of historically oppressed minorities, such as African and native Americans.

This has prompted many, notably the youth, to turn to black market videos to watch the latest Hollywood movies. The Oscar-winning "Titanic," illegally and amateurishly taped from big screens abroad and available in poor quality, is presently a hit in Iran.

The public enthusiasm for Hollywood is evident in the wide coverage given by Iranian newspapers to the industry.

Newspapers and film reviews regularly publish translations of interviews with American stars, and keep readers updated about the latest movies as well as their ratings

and box office performances.

Film buffs can even read reviews and critiques on the more publicised American and European movies, although they don't have a chance to see them on big screen.

Last year, the government daily Iran drew sharp criticism from Islamic hardliners after it published the list of movies selected by the prestigious Golden Globe, with Evita mentioned at the top.

"One has to be either careless or seek to mislead our youth to publish reports which propagate decadent Western cinema in our country," said Abbas Fatemi, a former cinema official, calling for "greater sensitivity" in the press.

Kayhan Havai, a hardline newspaper, called "Evita" an "immoral movie" and its American singer-actress Madonna a "corrupt singer."

But many clerics, concerned over the

falling rates of their television programmes, have called for "more attractive" shows to lure the young away from banned foreign satellite broadcasts and clandestine video.

Iran's parliament banned the satellite broadcasts three years ago to check the inroads of "depraved Western culture."

Aware of the attraction for Hollywood, growing numbers of tabloid-like publications have seized loosened restrictions in the past months and published cover pictures of American actresses in a bid to promote sales.

The move has irked the conservatives, who have pressured the moderate-run culture ministry to exercise greater controls.

Last month, 80 members of the parliament pushed a motion to ban such images, saying they were "offensive to the sacred status of women."

AMMAN (J.T.) — Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Foreign Minister Ali Haidar welcomed Friday the completion of the Belfast Agreement, which ended a week-long marathon of talks between the British and Irish governments and the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

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